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INSURGENT ORGANIZATION AND
OPERATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE
VIET CONG IN THE DELTA, 1964-1966

M. Anderson, M. Arnsten and H. Averch

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Rand
SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

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FOREWORD

This report is one of a series of Rand studies that examine the organization, operations, motivation, and morale of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that fought in South Vietnam.

Between August 1964 and December 1968 The Rand Corporation conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with the activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. Reports of those interviews, totaling some 62,000 pages, were reviewed and released to the public in June 1972. They can be obtained from the National Technical Information Service of the Department of Commerce.

The release of the interviews has made possible the declassification and release of some of the classified Rand reports derived from them. To remain consistent with the policy followed in reviewing the interviews, information that could lead to the identification of individual interviewees was deleted, along with a few specific references to sources that remain classified. In most cases, it was necessary to drop or to change only a word or two, and in some cases, a footnote. The meaning of a sentence or the intent of the author was not altered.

The reports contain information and interpretations relating to issues that are still being debated. It should be pointed out that there was substantive disagreement among the Rand researchers involved in Vietnam research at the time, and contrary points of view with totally different implications for U.S. operations can be found in the reports. This internal debate mirrored the debate that was then current throughout the nation.

A complete list of the Rand reports that have been released to the public is contained in the bibliography that follows.

(CRC, BJ: May 1975)

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PREFACE

The ability of insurgent organizations to learn, adapt, and operate in hostile environments has recently become an important research concern at RAND; for this ability will or should influence the design and style of present and future U.S. policy instruments.

One way to approach the analysis of insurgent organizations is through systematic, comprehensive, relatively detailed case study. This case study describes the decisionmaking, organization, and operating procedures of Viet Cong military units in one Delta province and the interactions among the military, paramilitary, and civilian elements in the organization.

We have no prescriptions for the conduct of the war, nor are we attempting to produce an intelligence document directly and immediately useful to agencies in the field. Through this and other case studies we are trying to gain some insight into required inputs -- information and resource flows -- and outputs -- political-military activities -- of insurgent organizations. The procedures and processes used in converting inputs to outputs efficiently and adaptively are our primary concern.

This study was sponsored jointly by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) and the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). It should be useful as a guide to Viet Cong organizational behavior and as a base for creating better analytical tools for the study of insurgent organizations. We have selected the level of detail for those members of the U.S. Government in Washington responsible for the design and application of counter-insurgency programs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Viet Cong believe that an efficient, centrally managed organization is a major tool of revolutionary war. Their organization is complex, but it has been effective. In this study we describe and analyze the decisionmaking and behavior of the Viet Cong main and local force units operating in one Delta province, Dinh Tuong. The period is 1964-1966. Using captured documents and interviews with ralliers, defectors, and prisoners,¹ we provide as comprehensive a portrait as data permit of how units make and execute tactical decisions and of how they supply themselves.

Terrain, population distributions, and the opponent's behavior constrain the structure and procedures of an insurgent organization. Propositions about the Viet Cong procedures in this study are limited to the Delta, although we have found it necessary to discuss the general structure of the organization and its decisionmaking process.² In our analysis we do not discuss GVN activities and procedures unless they are reflected in Viet Cong procedures. Available data do not permit pairing of Viet Cong accounts of province activities and GVN accounts.³

The Viet Cong consist of three organizations: The People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) or Communist Party, The Liberation Army, and

¹Available to RAND. We did not apply rigid rules for the acceptance or rejection of material in terms of frequency of occurrence, but our data on organization and procedures do seem consistent. As our expertise developed and the store of collated data increased, anomalies were easy to spot. Any anomalies or contradictions forced a reexamination of the collated data and a search for additional data.

²Certain activities are the same procedurally, but they differ in scale. For example, procedures for attacks on posts in Dinh Tuong are quite similar to those for Quang Ngai, a northern province. But full regiments have been involved in Quang Ngai, whereas battalions are most often involved in the Delta.

³Nevertheless, our examination of internal Viet Cong procedures does permit some inferences about what the GVN posture in Dinh Tuong must have been.

the National Liberation Front (NLF). The NLF is a collection of civilian support agencies. Decisionmaking is reserved to the Party. The Army and the NLF execute Party decisions. At each Army and NLF echelon there is a parallel Party echelon that makes decisions and monitors performance of the operating agencies.¹ Within military units there are political departments and officers responsible to the PRP that guide decisions and monitor operations.

Planning and programming require movement up, down and across the various political and military echelons. The decisionmaking process is cumbersome. A large number of agencies have to be coordinated. For message transmission the Viet Cong have depended extensively, but not exclusively, on couriers. The so-called communication-liaison networks are ingeniously operated, but their rate of transmission is slow. Nevertheless, these organizational arrangements insure tight political control of the operating agencies, decisionmaking based on full information, and analysis of political-military interactions. In fact, no military operation can get a "go" signal unless the associated political and social factors are favorable. The system works because Party discipline is strict, important officials in the operating agencies are Party members, and there is feedback on how well decisions are executed.

Of course, rapid planning and programming were not required until the United States entered the war. But the organization has procedures for reacting during crises. Decisionmaking will devolve on the agency immediately involved, and the Party will critically review the emergency decisions of that agency.

This entire organization emphasizes learning and adaptation. Our most substantial evidence of the Viet Cong as problem-solvers comes from the military side of the organization. The kinds of records an organization keeps tell us something about its values; and the Viet Cong generate and use a large number of after-action reports, lesson

¹The Army has its own vertical command structure for administration and logistics.

plans, field manuals, and operations research reports. These documents invariably list strong points and weak points and give suggestions for remedying shortcomings.

After an action, individuals and units assess their performances through self-criticism sessions. Self-criticism sessions are a Party function and even military commanders can receive full criticism from cadres at lower levels. Self-criticism may take place at the scene of action. For example, there are records of entire units returning to the battlefield after a costly engagement and analyzing in detail what went wrong.

A constantly repeated theme in Viet Cong documents is that technology has its weak points and the organization can adapt through new tactics and by making full use of information about the enemy's behavior patterns. On occasion the organization may generate alternative responses to new enemy weapons or tactics. Different units will then experiment with the alternatives, and the benefits of their experience will be disseminated through conferences, circulars, field manuals, and changes in training.

Once a problem has been solved, the solution will be made standard operating procedure. There are elaborate routines or programs for defensive and offensive operations. If the adversary changes behavior, the organization confronts a new problem; it is usually ready to revise its programs.

Each step in a routine has to be completed satisfactorily before the next step can be taken. Each routine lays heavy emphasis on intelligence and reconnaissance. The civilian side of the organization gathers information from the people on local conditions and enemy operations. In addition, reconnaissance units are in action prior to any engagements. And based on current information, planning goes forward.

Logistics planning receives as much attention as operations planning. For example, the Viet Cong carefully calculate the total number of rounds to be expended for each major weapon. Before an

operation, the demand for ammunition is balanced against supplies produced locally and supplies flowing in from Laos, Cambodia, and the sea. Before an action, the Viet Cong make detailed arrangements with civilian agencies for ammunition portage and for removal of the expected numbers of dead and wounded.

At some point, attacking units will rehearse major operations on a sand table or on an actual sand and string replica of the target. But officers withhold information on the name and location of the target from the troops -- one indication of the strict "need to know" criterion applied to the dissemination of information within the organization.

In addition to careful control of information in the planning process, attacking units often take long, circuitous, and even criss-crossing routes in moving to their final attack positions. If any movement is detected by the GVN, it becomes very difficult to distinguish between "routine" movement and movement leading up to an attack.

In general, Viet Cong units follow a defensive strategy, a strategy of evasion. They avoid contact with the enemy except at times and places of their own choice. In Dinh Tuong, constant mobility has been the rule with units moving from village to village every two or three days. However, as a hedge against being located, units build and maintain extensive fortifications around camp sites. A U.S. battalion commander states, "From detailed after-combat interviews, I have concluded it is impossible to penetrate, flank, or envelop these positions without taking extremely heavy casualties."

The success of this defensive strategy depends on adequate information, denial of information to the enemy, and a properly distributed labor and food supply. These things are provided by the political infrastructure -- the "civilian" organizations that control the population down to hamlet level.¹

¹How the infrastructure controls the population is a fascinating topic in itself. We are most familiar with terror, perhaps because terror is more dramatic than any other means of control. But Viet Cong

In the Delta, particularly in Dinh Tuong, the infrastructure has been able to cope with stress because the number of military and paramilitary units has been very low relative to the population under control and because the GVN has not been very active.

Villages controlled by the Viet Cong in Dinh Tuong are capable of producing a large rice surplus. Rice requirements for the main and local force units operating in the province are a very low fraction of this total surplus. However, the Viet Cong have encountered distribution problems. Dinh Tuong has seen a transition from a decentralized food contribution system to a food purchase system to a food depot system, controlled by Region and Province, in some areas.

Although the Viet Cong organization deserves respect, it is certainly not invulnerable. Our propositions about Viet Cong behavior in Dinh Tuong and the Delta are based on their interactions with the GVN. The available evidence suggests that the Viet Cong are well adapted to GVN tactics and procedures. The Viet Cong consider GVN organizations and operations to be predictable and "noisy."

Recent captured documents tell us that the United States is confronting the Viet Cong with hard choices. For example, one document summarizing the first six months of 1966 states:

Along with the use of artillery, aircraft, and chemical agents, the launching of numerous sweep operations, the United States and her henchmen have also increased their psychological activities in liberated areas, thus causing serious injury to the revolution and making the liberated areas unstable.

Whether the Viet Cong can adapt to the U. S. presence is a question for argument. Our study does not suffice for a finding on this question. Until very recently there were no U.S. troops in the

terror is rational. It is applied selectively and discriminately. We believe, however, that organization is a more potent weapon. Through coercion or persuasion, the Viet Cong place the people in local organizations controlled by the Party, providing checks on undesirable behavior and incentives for desirable behavior. Furthermore, structured activities -- for example, large doses of prescribed study -- economize on the resources the Party has to commit for control purposes.

Delta. What we can say is that the Viet Cong organization is designed to react by carefully observing and analyzing U.S. behavior and, noting any weak points, modifying its own behavior accordingly. Our usual concept of insurgency is that of an automatic three-phase process. Counterinsurgency programs have been built around this distinction. Planning and programming for insurgency, as does strategic nuclear planning and programming, should adopt the concept of the enemy as a learning, adapting, reacting organization.

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Fig. 1 — Military regions - Administrative divisions in South Vietnam

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Chih-ti, Chih-chi: Pai-chan, Pai-sheng. Know
your foe, know yourself: one hundred battles,
one hundred victories.

Sun Tzu, The Art of War (400-320 B.C.?)

I. INTRODUCTION

Confrontations in Vietnam between insurgent and counterinsurgent forces differ radically from our previous image of large-scale land combat. There is no front; contact between opposing forces is relatively infrequent, and when it does occur it results in brief, intense fire-fights between companies, battalions, or, at most, regiments, and ends with the withdrawal of the insurgent forces. According to insurgent accounts, success depends critically on precisely those aspects of the tactical situation that are either ignored or slighted in systems analysis of large-scale land combat -- civilian information, military intelligence, denial of information, command-control, planning, maneuver, and surprise. Insurgents weigh military outcomes in terms of the social and political consequences as well as damage. Consequently, we believe the first step in evaluating the effectiveness of alternative programs designed to counter insurgent forces must be a detailed description of the organization, operations, and logistics of the insurgent forces.

This case study describes and analyzes the decisionmaking and behavior of Viet Cong¹ Main and Local Forces and operating in one Delta province, Dinh Tuong.² To the extent that sources available at RAND permit, we examine the sequence of decisions and procedures required

¹The term Viet Cong is pejorative when used by GVN personnel. The insurgents generally do not refer to themselves as Viet Cong except when, as prisoners or ralliers, they feel that the term is expected of them. Although there are a number of other terms that might be considered emotionally neutral -- Front, NLF, PRP, LA -- none of these is in general use nor is any one of them accurate. Not all insurgents are in the National Liberation Front, nor are they all in the Communist Party. Viet Cong means, literally, Vietnamese Communist. However, it has come to mean the insurgents in general -- the Army, the Party, the guerrillas, and the sympathizers -- and we have elected to retain the term in the interests of brevity and clarity.

²Dinh Tuong is in Viet Cong Military Region 2.

in the conduct of specific military activities. We have grouped these activities into two broad categories: defensive activities, such as mobility and fortification; and offensive activities, such as ambushes, raids, and attacks by maneuvering forces.

Before 1964, military activities in the Delta were conducted by relatively small guerrilla units.¹ From 1964 on, the Viet Cong military forces were concentrated into battalions and regiments. The source materials we have used describe Viet Cong organization and procedures from 1964 through 1966.

We concentrate primarily on the military and paramilitary activities and programs of units in Dinh Tuong province. This province was chosen because it seems typical of Delta provinces, and we have more data on Viet Cong activities here than in any other province.

We made a special effort to use captured documents. The kinds of reports that the Viet Cong use and the kinds of records they keep tell us a good deal about their organization and their perceptions of themselves and the world in which they operate. Other sources include RAND Corporation interviews with Viet Cong ralliers and prisoners, and interviews conducted by the National Interrogation Center (NIC) and Military Interrogation Center (MIC).

Although many data exist, there are inherent constraints on our ability to study operational procedures and decisions. The RAND Corporation interviews have limited applicability in studies of organizational decisionmaking, because the sample contains relatively few major decisionmakers. One characteristic operating procedure of the organization is the rigorous denial of information to low and middle echelons. Interviews from the two interrogation centers attempt to extract information useful in the construction of orders of battle. And few captured documents at RAND deal with strategic objectives, decisions, and plans at the province or regional level. But higher echelon staffs spend much time in constructing plans and objectives

¹However, the Viet Cong began to form battalions in 1961. See Appendix A.

that lower echelons will find operationally useful, and they also approve plans generated at lower levels.

Because of these constraints, our descriptions of the Viet Cong organization and its activities take on a composite form. They are derived from a careful collation of all sources available to RAND. Interviews were checked against documents and vice versa. It was not possible to evolve rigid rules for acceptance or rejection of material in terms of frequency of occurrence. Our data on organization and procedure do seem consistent. As our expertise developed and the store of collated data increased, anomalies were easy to spot.

Where we have identified an activity in Dinh Tuong but lack a concrete example, we on occasion use an example from adjacent provinces in the Delta. We have also used documents that apply to all of Military Region 2, since province political and military units would be expected to adhere to regionwide operational procedures. The regionwide procedures serve to control lower echelons and to disseminate information.

In addition to these analytical constraints, there are at least two substantive limitations in the study. Obviously, terrain and population distributions will exert a strong influence on an organization's standard operating procedures and logistics. Dinh Tuong lies in an area south of Saigon referred to as the southern plains, or Delta. Delta terrain and population distribution constrain our discussion of operational procedures and logistics.¹

¹The Delta is completely dominated by the Mekong River, which enters South Vietnam from Cambodia and flows southeasterly through several channels, emptying into the South China Sea. The Delta is interlaced with a dense network of rivers, streams, and irrigation canals. Most of the land is under rice cultivation. Numerous

An insurgent organization's operation and logistics will also adapt to the behavior of its adversary. We suggest below that the Viet Cong were able to adapt to GVN tactics between 1964 and 1966. However, our ability to examine the GVN's behavior directly is quite limited. GVN standard operating procedures are beyond the scope of this study except when seen by the Viet Cong as affecting their procedures.

Section II contains a discussion of the Viet Cong military organization and enumerates the various types of units that have operated in Dinh Tuong. Section III examines decisionmaking procedures within the military organization and discusses the relations between Party and Army. Section IV discusses the role of political and military organizations in generating the military behavior described in Sections V, VI, and VII. Section V examines Viet Cong defensive activities, and Section VI discusses the different kinds of offensive activities. Section VII examines some logistics procedures for Dinh Tuong.¹

settlements, trees, roads, and orchards are located along the higher ground adjacent to waterways.

Two other geographic regions play an important role in the activity of this area. One of these is found along the northern edge of the Delta region. This area is a low, swampy marshland, for the most part uncultivated. It is called the "Plain of Reeds" since its vegetative cover is primarily sharp-bladed reeds and rushes that grow to heights of about seven feet. Roads, canals, and small waterways are usually seen in the open terrain. In peacetime the size of this area was decreasing because of reclamation projects.

The second region is the 2,000 square miles of swampland that stretch along the coast from the Ca Mau Peninsula at the tip of South Vietnam to Yeng Tau (Cap St. Jacques) east of Saigon. The primary vegetation of this area is mangrove, which thrives in brackish water and muddy soil. Mangroves reach a height of 15 to 40 feet and form a dense canopy overhead. Their numerous roots present a nearly impenetrable ground barrier. Some reclamation projects have been launched in small parts of this area.

¹The Appendixes contain special material on intelligence, communication, and training.

See L. P. Holliday, Viet Cong Logistics, The RAND Corporation, for a general discussion of the civilian support required by the army. Section VII here deals with problems and procedures in the acquisition of food, ammunition, and porters.

II. VIET CONG MILITARY ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Before we begin to describe the process of decisionmaking and the military activities of the insurgents, we need to define the structure and function of the indigenous organizations that participate, directly or indirectly, in the conduct of the war in South Vietnam.¹ Because this Memorandum describes military behavior and the image of the war as seen by the insurgents, we will in general follow their nomenclature in discussing organizational structures.

In this section we briefly describe the overall structure of the military establishment, trace the various command echelons, and list the types of units controlled at each echelon. Section III gives an overview of the structure and functions of the political organizations as they relate to the activities of the military establishment.

MILITARY STRUCTURE

The military organization of the insurgents in South Vietnam is the Liberation Army,² which consists of echelons of command ranging from the commander-in-chief down to squad leaders, of staff officers working in the three staff departments of the territorial headquarters and combat units (the Military, Political, and Rear Services departments), and of fighters in the combat units. The command echelons consist of military and political officers. In territorial headquarters and in combat units, the military commander and his deputy and the ranking political officer and his assistant belong to the

¹Since the focus of this study is on the Delta and the indigenous insurgent organization operating there, we have made no attempt to establish the degree of control that North Vietnam exerts over the indigenous organizations in the South. In any case, source material available to us does not justify an analysis of command-control relationships between insurgent organizations in the South and North Vietnamese organizations.

²See Douglas Pike, Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, p. 233.

higher echelons of command and form command sections. In certain cases the chief of staff and the heads of the three staff departments may be included in the command section.

We can distinguish four functions of this military organization. The decisionmakers issue policy directives that are translated into operational plans by the staffs of the territorial headquarters and the combat units.¹ The echelons of command implement the operational plans by translating them into a series of commands. Finally, the fighters of the Army combat units execute the commands.

Territorial Organization

The Liberation Army is under the command of the Army Headquarters.² Various territorial military headquarters form the lower command echelons of the Army. The frontispiece (Fig. 1), p. xxii, shows that the Viet Cong have divided South Vietnam into six military regions.³ Each region, excepting the fourth, includes several provinces and the latter are subdivided into districts. The districts are subdivided into villages which, in Vietnamese usage, are administrative entities controlling several hamlets. Corresponding to each territorial division there is a territorial headquarters of the Army.

Figure 2 shows the various command echelons in the Army and in particular in Military Region 2.⁴ The command section of the military headquarters is often called the Military Affairs Committee or Section. Each village within the areas controlled by the Viet Cong has a village

¹The staff also performs administrative functions.

²It is estimated that the staff section of the Liberation Army Headquarters has over 1,000 people.

³The Viet Cong call the four southernmost regions Nam Bo. Region 4 is a special region for Saigon and the area around it.

⁴Command arrangements in Military Regions 5 and 6 are somewhat more complex. In these regions there is an interprovince organization called the Interzone which coordinates military operations in several provinces.

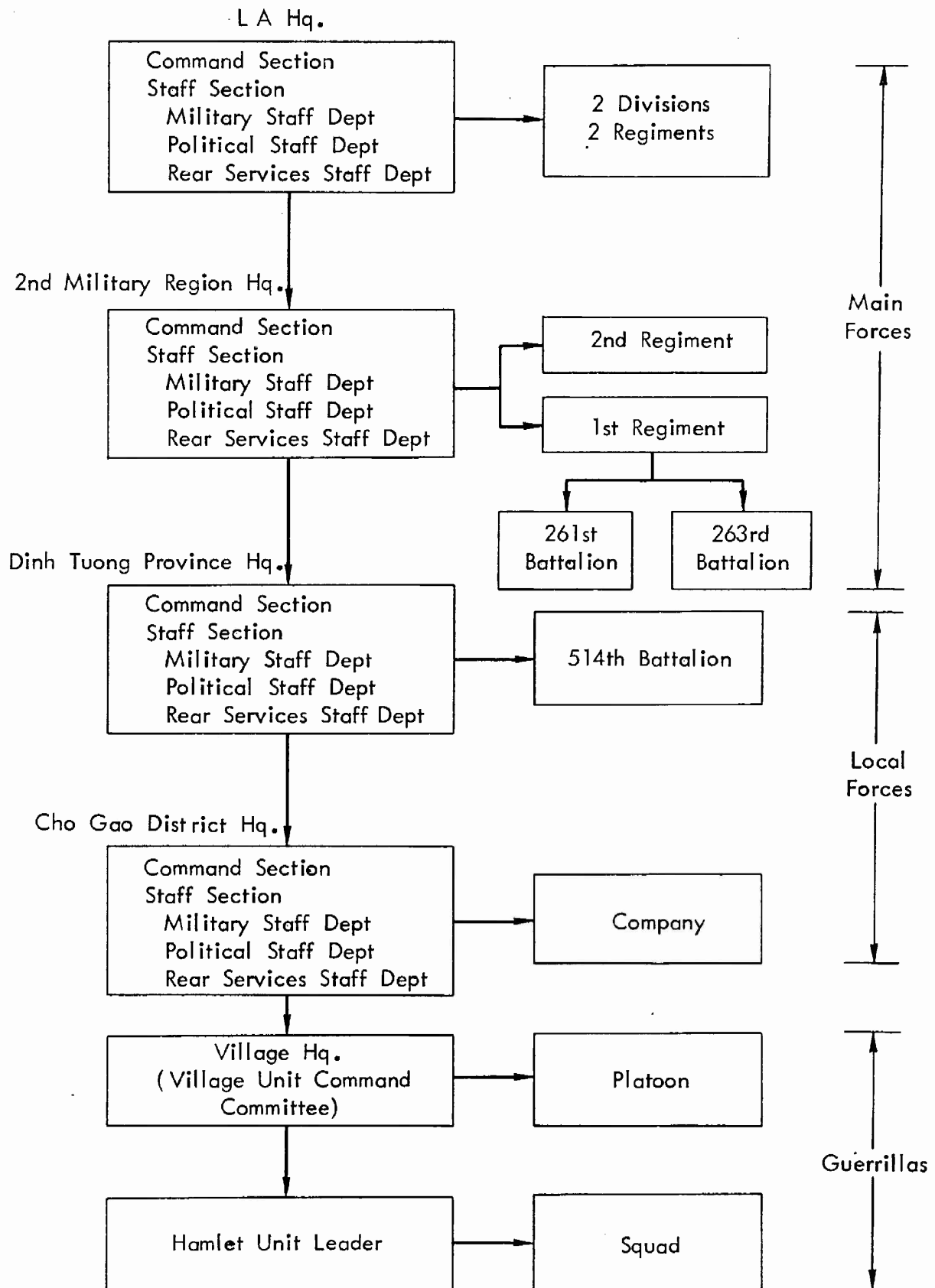


Fig.2—Territorial command echelons and subordinate combat units in the Liberation Army

headquarters, called either the Village Unit Command Committee or the Command Section. The hamlet forces are under the command of the Hamlet Unit Leader.

The military units of the Liberation Army are under the direct command of either Army Headquarters or one of the territorial headquarters. Army Headquarters controls two divisions and two regiments.¹ With the exception of Military Regions 5 and 6, the Region Headquarters usually controls regiments; Province Headquarters controls one or two battalions, and a District Headquarters controls a company. A village controlled by the Viet Cong usually has a platoon, and a hamlet has a squad of guerrillas.

Main, Local, and Militia Forces

According to the terminology of the Viet Cong, the military forces under the control of Army Headquarters and Region Headquarters are the Main Forces; the forces under the command of the Province and District Headquarters are the Local Forces. The militia, consisting of guerrillas and self-defense units, are the forces under the control of village and hamlet authorities.² Guerrillas are full-time fighters organized into squads and platoons, usually under the command of village authorities, and operate in the neighborhood of the hamlets and the village. The self-defense units,³ consisting of inhabitants of hamlets, perform military tasks on a part-time basis and operate in the immediate vicinity of the hamlet in which they live. The self-defense units

¹Estimates of the military units and their strengths mentioned in this section were taken from the U.S. estimate of Army Order of Battle for June 1966.

²This is the usage in the MACV Order of Battle. However, sometimes captured documents refer to the self-defense forces as militia.

³In 1966 the district, village, and hamlet forces were often understrength, as a consequence of the transfer of personnel from guerrilla units to Main Force units.

may be composed of male and female youths, farmers, and capable older people. During normal times, these persons live with their families and do their daily work, but when the enemy attacks they must coordinate with the guerrillas to counterattack. (See Table 1.)

These three types of military units differ in the quality and quantity of equipment and in the area of the territorial division within which they operate. The best equipment is reserved for the Main Force units; the militia have relatively poorer weapons. The operations of the military forces under the command of a territorial headquarters are usually restricted to the territorial division. Guerrillas operate within and around their hamlets and villages. District companies move within their district and the province battalions operate within their province. Main force units operate across province boundaries, but within their respective regions.

Table 1 shows the confirmed 1966 strength of the Main Force, Local Force, guerrilla, and self-defense units in South Vietnam, in Region 2 and in Dinh Tuong province. Excluding the North Vietnamese units, the combat strength of the Main and Local Forces of the Liberation Army was 59,175 in South Vietnam, 8,940 in Region 2, and 2,665 in Dinh Tuong province. In addition, the strength of the militia in these three territorial divisions was 112,760, 24,835, and 6,780 respectively.

Region 2

We shall be describing the planning, operations, and logistics of the Viet Cong military forces in Dinh Tuong province, located in Region 2. Region 2 headquarters controls two regiments, the 1st Dong Thap (261st and 263rd battalions) and the 2nd Dong Thap regiments. Between 1964 and 1966, the 261st and 263rd battalions and the headquarters of the 1st Dong Thap regiment operated in Dinh Tuong.¹

¹The three battalions of the second regiment have operated in Kien Hoa and Hau Nghia provinces.

Table 1

CONFIRMED STRENGTH OF LIBERATION ARMY COMBAT UNIT^a

Territorial Division	Main Forces	Local Forces	Militia ^b	
			Guerrillas	Self-defense Units
South Vietnam	28,740	30,435	112,760 ^d (possibly 330,000)	
Region 2 ^c	2,290	6,605	8,340	16,495
Dinh Tuong Province	1,600	1,065	1,780	5,000

Notes:

^aA confirmed unit is one whose designation is known, subordination has been established, and location has been determined from a minimum of two reports from captives or returnees, or from captured documents. The strength of the North Vietnamese units has not been included.

^bGuerrillas are full-time forces organized into squads and platoons; they do not always live in their home village or hamlet. Self-defense units are composed of part-time guerrillas. The militia consists of the guerrilla units and the self-defense units.

^cFigure 1 shows that Hau Nghia province is included in Region 2. However, in reporting the strength of the Viet Cong units in Region 2, we have not included the military units operating in Hau Nghia.

^dThe official estimate of the total strength of the militia in South Vietnam is 112,760. A captured document written in mid-1966 reports that there were 180,000 guerillas and 150,000 members of the self-defense forces for a total of 330,000 members of the militia. The document recommends that the strength of the militia should be doubled.

The 514th is the Dinh Tuong province battalion under the command of the province headquarters. In addition, the Viet Cong have organized five district companies in the six districts of Dinh Tuong.

The 261st and 263rd battalions coordinate their activities with the province and district authorities in Dinh Tuong. Sources indicate that the province may be divided into two operational areas, one for the Main Force units and the other for the local units. However, in case of a joint operation, the Main Force battalion or regiments will control local units.¹

BATTALION STRUCTURE

According to MACV a typical Viet Cong infantry battalion has the structure shown in Fig. 3. There are three to six hundred men organized into a command staff, three infantry companies, a combat support (heavy weapons) company, and specialized units: reconnaissance, signal, and sapper. The specialized units organic to the battalion, or those which coordinate with it, play a key role in battalion operations. Their functions are described below.

Reconnaissance Platoon

The missions of the battalion reconnaissance platoon fall into the following categories: reconnaissance, guidance and cover for troops on the move, and military police. The primary reconnaissance mission includes description and mapping of terrain routes of travel and installations, recommendation of march and withdrawal routes and future campsites, and surveillance of enemy units.² Reconnaissance

¹Companies may and do operate independently of their parent battalions. When this occurs the company commander leads the reconnaissance party on a combat mission to investigate the command post site, bivouac area prior to attack, fields of fire and access routes open to the company.

²In addition to organic reconnaissance units, a regional reconnaissance company operates in conjunction with the 261st and 263rd battalions of Military Region 2. The company reports to the battalion command staffs but is not organic to the battalion.

Company members serve as guides and terrain reconnaissance agents for the command staff. They also serve as guides for regional sapper

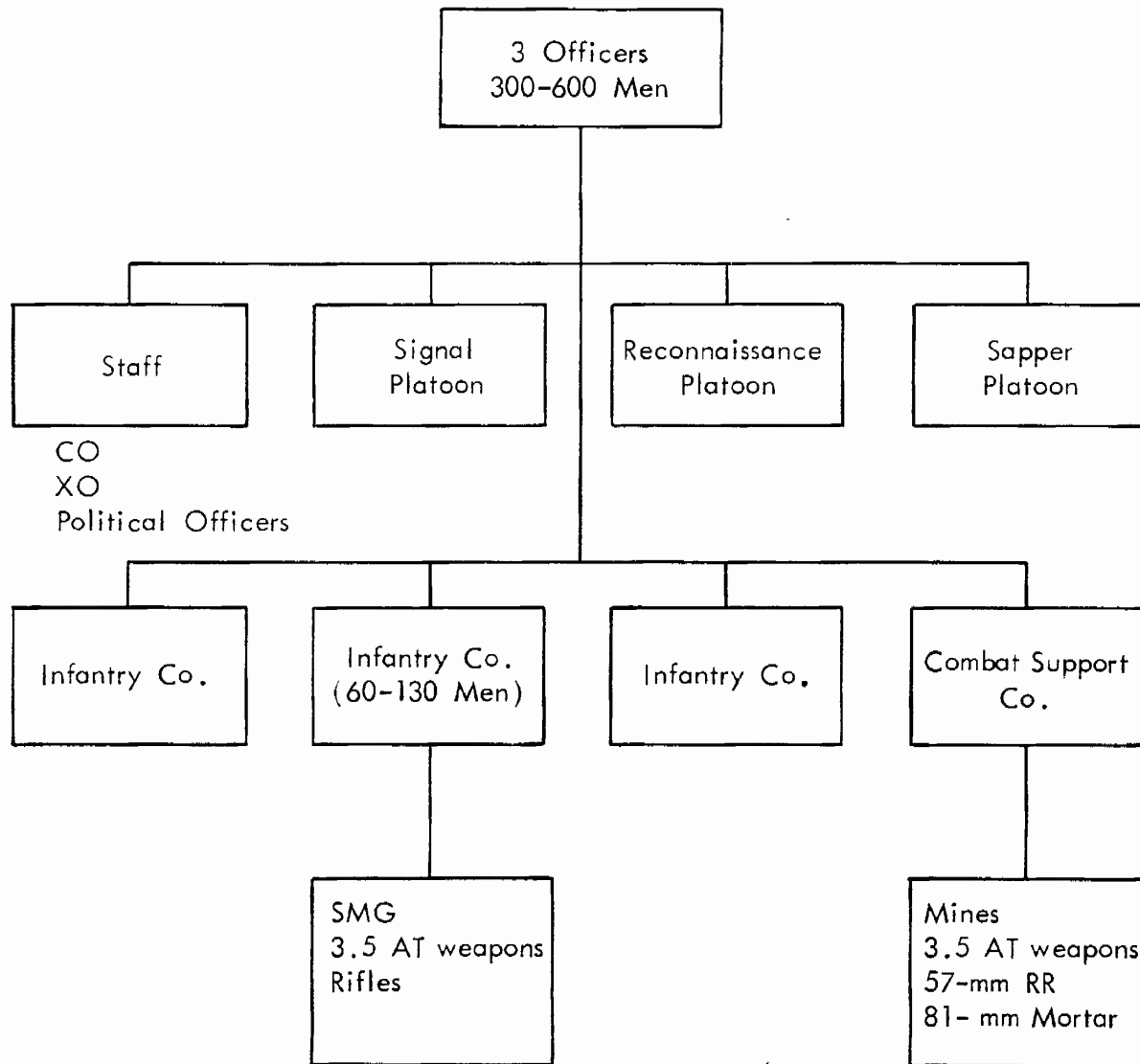


Fig.3—Typical Viet Cong Infantry Battalion

personnel are equipped with radios to keep the battalion staff informed of GVN positions and operations.

A battalion will ordinarily have one reconnaissance platoon. Each company has a reconnaissance squad. Members of these platoons and squads receive special training.

Reconnaissance units are considered to be elite units because they operate away from the main body and in enemy territory. The political reliability of members of such units must be high since they have more opportunity to defect and also take greater risks.

Signal Units

Signal units are generally organized into platoons or companies organic to the Local (province) or Main Force battalions. The mission of the signal platoon in the combat battalion is to provide communications with subordinate units while in bivouac, movement, or battle. Radios are regularly used between battalions and at all higher echelons particularly when there is a need for instant transmission of information.¹ A battalion uses radio, telephone, and runners to communicate with its companies. Companies and lower echelon units usually communicate by messengers.

Sapper Units

Sapper or demolition units play an important role in operations.²

units. (Apparently Region 2 believes that local guerrillas are unreliable and cannot process information quickly enough.)

¹DT-107; DT-60.

²Although most of the Organizational structures for Viet Cong region and province main force battalions depict an organic sapper company or platoon, there is reason to believe that these units are not organic to the battalion, but are attached to them for missions; they probably receive their orders directly from either the Province or Region Military Affairs Section. Elements of a Region 2 sapper battalion operate in Dinh Tuong. Sappers from the regional unit are attached to regional battalions for special operations.

Sapper units have been organized in various strengths: 3 man cells; 6 to 7 man squads; 25 to 30 man platoons; 70 to 100 men companies.¹ The general mission of a sapper unit is to destroy any assigned objective by explosives. In an attack a sapper unit supports the attacking force by eliminating barbed wire and blowing up enemy strong points. During a withdrawal a sapper unit sets up booby traps and plants mines to delay and harass the enemy. In its independent role, a sapper unit has the mission of destroying roads, bridges, or any assigned objective.²

The following is an account of a sapper training course in Dinh Tuong:

The course lasted for three months. Trainees numbered about two platoons. Troops were first taught how to avoid making noises while walking in various kinds of terrain such as flooded or muddy rice fields. That took us about a fortnight.

They spent the remaining two and one-half months in practice. Phat Da Pagoda was used as a mockup military post. Troops practiced impending attacks on military posts by trying to sneak near to it to lay mines. A team played the role of GVN soldiers who guarded the post. They had to discover our operation, and we had to practice until we were able to reach to the walls of the pagoda unnoticed and blow up some small dynamite sticks, the size of a thumb (dynamite stock #8) which had little destructive power when exploded.³

Rear Services⁴

The Regional Rear Services Staff provides the logistics support for all main force units operating within the Regions. The Regional

¹In April 1966 a directive from the PRP Central Committee stated that more effort should be placed on the development of these specialized services. To implement this directive a Sapper and Special Action Staff was established at Army Headquarters to assist in training sapper units. The Special Action Staff was to coordinate with special offices established at the regional and provincial levels.

²See Section VI for further discussion of sappers.

³DT-113.

⁴See Section VII for a discussion of logistics procedures for Main and Local force units.

Rear Services Staff is typically broken down into several elements. Region 2 Rear Services has three elements. The main element, with only a few personnel, operates at Region Headquarters. The second element is stationed in Dinh Tuong and the third in Kien Hoa. Cadres rotate among the elements.

Region 2 Rear Services Staff has direct control over its subordinate units. The services provided by this staff include medical, quartermaster (food and clothing), finance, transportation, organization of supply depots and worksites, and weapons distribution.

Province or local rear services elements are independent of the Regional organization. One high level captive (a Region Rear Services staff officer) indicates that this separation of the rear service function was not logical and provided a system with defective leadership and efficiency. The Province Rear Services Section is subordinate to the Province Military Affairs Committee.¹

MILITIA

Militia units operate at hamlet and village levels. The hamlet possesses the smallest size unit, village next, district the largest. Unlike their main force counterparts, militia units are not bound by any fixed criteria in organization. They are developed, modified, and equipped according to the situation in each region and with the ordnance supply capabilities.

Defensively they may be called on to assist in the defense of combat villages against ARVN sweep operations. In such cases, they are stationed to provide mutual support. They also try to counter

¹In Dinh Tuong province the rear services unit was designated the 509th company. It became operational in July 1965. The company was composed of at least four platoons. Squads within the platoon had eight members. Platoons could be composed of either male or female personnel. The platoons of this company transported ammunition for supply of main force combat units, and helped evacuate wounded from the battlefield (DT-117).

the infiltration of GVN agents into liberated villages. They serve as guides and intelligence agents for Main force units. For example, they may determine convenient sniping positions for Main force units in attacks on posts.

Offensively, militia units conduct ambushes, snipe at GVN posts, and assist in attacking GVN posts. Small detachments may be sent to a post to bait troops out of fortified positions or they may engage the enemy to gain time for main or local force maneuvers. They may be used in destroying bridges, roads, storehouses, and so on.

Militia units have other functions such as warning the Viet Cong civilian administration when enemy forces approach, protecting civilian laborers on various missions, arresting civilians or deserters, escorting supplies, and the like. They also lay mines and conduct sabotage operations, protect propaganda teams, aid in recruiting, and so forth.

III. THE ARMY AND PARTY: THE DUAL SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

From the time of the Viet Minh war against the French up to the present struggle in Vietnam, the insurgents have insisted on close political control over all military organizations from headquarters down to platoon level. Consequently, the decisionmaking process and the activities of the insurgent military organization cannot be understood without considering the political organizations. There are two related organizations that exercise political control in the Army. One of these organizations is outside the military organization: the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), the South Vietnam Communist party. In addition, within the formal structure of the military establishment there is a second organization consisting of political departments and officers whose task is the political supervision of the military activities.

THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

During the French war in Indochina the leading role in the Viet Minh Front was played by the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Lao Dong or Workers' Party. After the partition of Vietnam, covert members of the Lao Dong, now the Communist Party of North Vietnam, remained in the south. In January 1962, one year after the formation of the NLF, the PRP was founded in South Vietnam.¹ The PRP publicly acknowledged that it was the "Marxist-Leninist Party of South Vietnam" and

¹P. J. Honey pointed out that there was a precedent for creating the PRP instead of maintaining a single Lao Dong party in both parts of Vietnam. In 1951 three Communist parties were created as successors of the Indochinese Communist Party. The successors were the Lao Dong and the Laotian and Cambodian Communist parties. A secret Lao Dong document captured in 1952 stated that the Laotian and Cambodian Communist parties continued to receive their orders from the former Indochinese Communist Party, but they did so secretly, and the overt leadership of the two parties was in the hands of Laotians and Cambodians. According to Honey, it was expedient at that time to give the impression in Laos and Cambodia as well as outside of

insisted that it was the "vanguard of the NLF, the paramount member."¹ In public statements the PRP denied that it had any official ties with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam or with the Lao Dong Party, beyond the normal "fraternal ties of communism."² However, interviews with PRP prisoners and ralliers indicate that PRP members believe that there is only one Party in all of Vietnam.

The degree of subordination of the PRP to the Lao Dong Party is an important topic meriting serious study, but, as we have indicated, the source material available to us does not permit us to undertake such an analysis. Some studies have tried to establish the organizational interface between the PRP and the Lao Dong.³ However, we feel a more fruitful approach would consist of selecting an important policy issue and studying the differences, if any, between the spectrum of opinion held by the members of the PRP Central Committee and the

Indochina, that the communist parties were controlled by indigenous elements. (P. J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, pp. 169-170. See also P. J. Honey, "North Vietnam's Workers' Party and South Vietnam's People's Revolutionary Party," Pacific Affairs, Winter 1962-1963, pp. 375-383.)

¹Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, p. 137.

²Ibid.

³For example, the 1965 State Department White Paper, and MACJ 236-1, VC Political Infrastructure.

Ever since the founding of the PRP, many U.S. publications on the insurgency in South Vietnam have referred to the "Central Office, South Vietnam" or COSVN. In these publications the term COSVN was given at least four different connotations: 1. It is a territorial committee of the Lao Dong to which the regional committees of the PRP are subordinate. 2. It is the Lao Dong command headquarters directing the PRP Central Committee. 3. It is simply the PRP Central Committee. 4. It is the physical location, in Zone D, of certain elements of the PRP and the NLF. (See the 1965 State Department White Paper, MACJ 236-1, VC Political Infrastructure; G. A. Carver, Jr., "The Faceless Viet Cong," Foreign Affairs, April 1966; and D. Pike, Viet Cong.) Though the term COSVN is often interpolated in captured documents by Vietnamese and American translators, the insurgents seldom, if ever, use this term. Because the term COSVN is ambiguous, we have deliberately avoided using it.

spectrum of opinion held by the members of the Lao Dong Central Committee.¹

The Political Officer as the Party Representative in the Liberation Army

In addition to military officers whose functions are similar to those of officers in Western armies, the Liberation Army also has political officers who have no analogues in the military organizations in the West.² The political officers organized into a political department of the army are a hybrid institution: They are a part of the military organization and at the same time are representatives of the Party.³ These political officers, in addition to other tasks, play an important role in decisionmaking at every level of the military organization.

A political officer and an assistant political officer are assigned to the command section of every combat unit from division down to company level. Platoons subordinate to a company do not have political officers; however, independent platoons have political officers. Furthermore, the political officers assigned to regimental and division headquarters have political staffs.⁴ There are also political officers and political staffs in army headquarters and in all territorial military headquarters.⁵

¹One possible example of disagreement between PRP and the Lao Dong is described in P. J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, p. 112.

²With one exception: During the French Revolution, commissaires de l'Assemblée nationale aux armées were assigned to the French armies.

³Political officers and political departments also exist in the North Vietnamese and Red Chinese armies. By mid-1947 most units of the Viet Minh army in Nam Bo had political officers attached to every level of command down to company level (Log No. 04-0151-64).

⁴For example, a regimental political staff consisted of 21 men (AG-426).

⁵In the Red Chinese Army there are political officers attached to every combat unit down to company level. A political staff department exists in regiments, divisions, and in territorial headquarters. (Alexander L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, The Korean War and Its Aftermath, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1967, pp. 46-47.)

The selection and training of political officers is described in the interrogation of a rallier:

In the Viet Cong units, all the men who were selected to take a training course to become Political Officers usually were the Platoon cadres, Platoon Leaders or Assistant Platoon Leaders....Company Political Officers were usually Platoon Leaders or Assistant Platoon Leaders, who were sent to take a political training course for about six months in the Region Committee or "R" (Central Office of South Vietnam). Political Officers in the Battalion were usually the old Company Political Officers with good experience. They were sent to study for about six months or one year at "R" to become Battalion Political Officers. Regiment Political Officers were also selected from the Battalion Political Officers to study at "R" for about one year.

Political officers are also promoted to higher command positions as military officers. Here are some examples of promotions: A commander of the 1st Company of the 514th Battalion became political officer in the Dinh Tuong Military Affairs Committee. The political officer of the 514th Battalion became the head of the Military Affairs Committee. A returnee worked on the political staff of a brigade in North Vietnam; after his return to South Vietnam, he was assigned to the political staff of a regiment and then became the military commander of one of the battalions in the regiment.¹

A captured document on the political mission in training stresses that the political officer should be given military training:

The important condition for successful accomplishment of the political task in the training service requires the political cadre to make effort in improving his military knowledge. When possessing a firm military knowledge, the cadre will be able to fulfill his political mission, to discover all mistakes, to motivate and guide the masses to successfully accomplish their training mission. Without military knowledge he misses the power for carrying out his mission. For that reason the military training is a requirement for the Political Officer, moreover the military science is so complicated that the person in charge must possess a good knowledge to complete his assigned mission.

¹DT-107; DT-110; AG-426.

From these examples, it is apparent that the political officer is well versed in military matters and that the military officer may have been a political officer at some point in his career.¹

Aside from the role he plays in decisionmaking, which will be discussed later, the political officer is responsible for all "political" activities in his unit. The word "political" summarizes many activities, as can be seen in the following list of functions that fall within his area of responsibility: training, education, political education, morale, selection and preparation of candidates for the PRP, security, dossiers on cadres in his unit, military and civilian proselytizing, and liaison with territorial headquarters² and with subordinate combat units.³

PRP Membership in the Army

Table 2 shows the percentage of Party members and Labor Youth Group⁴ members in one North Vietnamese and five Liberation Army combat units and in the militia units of Region 5. In the five Main Force and Local Force units that we have examined, the PRP membership ranges from 17 to 21 percent and Labor Youth Group membership ranges from 50 to

¹A. George described the background of the political officers in the Chinese Army during the Korean War: "Fragmentary information obtained from our interviews on the careers of individual political officers indicates that they were often recruited from among junior military cadres. It would also appear to be the case that during the course of his career a political officer often received alternating political and military assignments at company, battalion and perhaps higher levels. As a result, at the time of the Korean War the Chinese Communist Army appeared to be surprisingly free of complaints that political officers were not equipped to offer military commanders seasoned military advice." (Alexander L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, p. 116.)

²The political officer of the 514th attends meetings of the Dinh Tuong Province Military Affairs Committee (DT-107).

³Political officers from regimental headquarters are assigned to supervise operations of subordinate battalions (AG-426).

⁴One of the functions of the PRP Labor Youth Group is the preparation of members between the ages of 16 and 25 for possible future membership in the PRP. Pike, Viet Cong, p. 150.

Table 2

PRP AND LABOR YOUTH GROUP MEMBERSHIP IN LIBERATION ARMY COMBAT UNITS
(1964-1966 data)

Unit	Percent Membership in Combat Units		
	PRP	Labor Youth Group	Reference
1. North Vietnamese 2nd Bat. of 202nd Reg.	30 (Lao Dong)	60	NIC 372/66
2. Liberation Army Main Forces 1st Bat., 610th Div., Binh Dinh province	20 (approx.)	--	AG-426
96th Bat. of Eastern Nam Bo	12	--	AG-441
3. Liberation Army Local Forces 501st Bat. of Binh Dinh province	17	50	AG-42
A Company of the 502nd Bat. Cai Lay District Co., Dinh Tuong	11 to 12 21	-- 59	AG-405 DT-70
4. Militia In Region 5:			
guerrilla units	6 to 10	10 to 15	12-022-66
self-defense units	2 to 4	5 to 8	12-022-66

Table 3

PRP MEMBERSHIP IN LIBERATION ARMY UNITS OF WESTERN NAM BO
(1963 data based on Log No. 1-119)

Unit	Percent PRP Membership in Liberation Army Units
All Liberation Army Forces in Western Nam Bo	27
Provincial Units	22
District Units	20
Guerrillas	10
Combat Support Units	13

59 percent of the strength of the combat unit. The percentages are considerably lower in the militia units of Region 5.

For comparison Table 3 shows 1963 PRP membership data for units operating in Western Nam Bo. In both tables memberships for battalions and platoons range from 10 to 20 percent.

The membership of the PRP in combat units is large, and, what is more important, all of the higher command cadres and most of the other cadres are members of the PRP.¹ In a battalion "cadres of company rank upward must be Party members."² In an independent district company cadres and platoon leaders have to be PRP members; furthermore, at least one member of each squad, not necessarily the squad leader, has to be a PRP member.³ In the 514th battalion all platoon leaders and assistant platoon leaders were PRP members.⁴

However, there are exceptions: "If a non-party member does advance, it will be in a position which has no command responsibility."⁵ "A person who is not a party member will almost never advance above the position of assistant platoon leader."

The percent of PRP membership is still greater in the staff department of the Military Headquarters of Region 1. A captured document lists the officers and non-commissioned officers of the military staff department. Fifty-nine percent of the 70 members of the

¹Here the term cadre denotes the officers and non-commissioned officers down to squad leaders. However, Soviet and Chinese conceptions of a Party cadre are more complex; see P. Selznick, The Organizational Weapon: A Study in Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics, The RAND Corporation, R-201, January 1952, pp. 18-20; and Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966, pp. 162-167.

²AG-426.

³DT-70. An independent company is directly subordinate to District Hq. and is not a subordinate unit of a battalion.

⁴DT-110.

⁵Two examples of officers who were not Party members can be found in AG-523 and NIC Report No. 372/66.

staff department are PRP members. All ten of the senior captains and captains, 70 percent of the senior lieutenants, and approximately half of the lieutenants and sergeants are PRP members.

PRP Territorial Organization

The organization of the PRP consists of a vertical chain of PRP committees. The highest permanent decisionmaking body is the PRP Central Executive Committee.¹ Below the PRP Central Committee are the territorial committees, the PRP Region, Province, and District Committees. Below the district level there are PRP village chapters and PRP hamlet cells. The PRP territorial organization is shown in Fig. 4. A separate PRP organization, not shown in Fig. 4, functions in cities of South Vietnam.

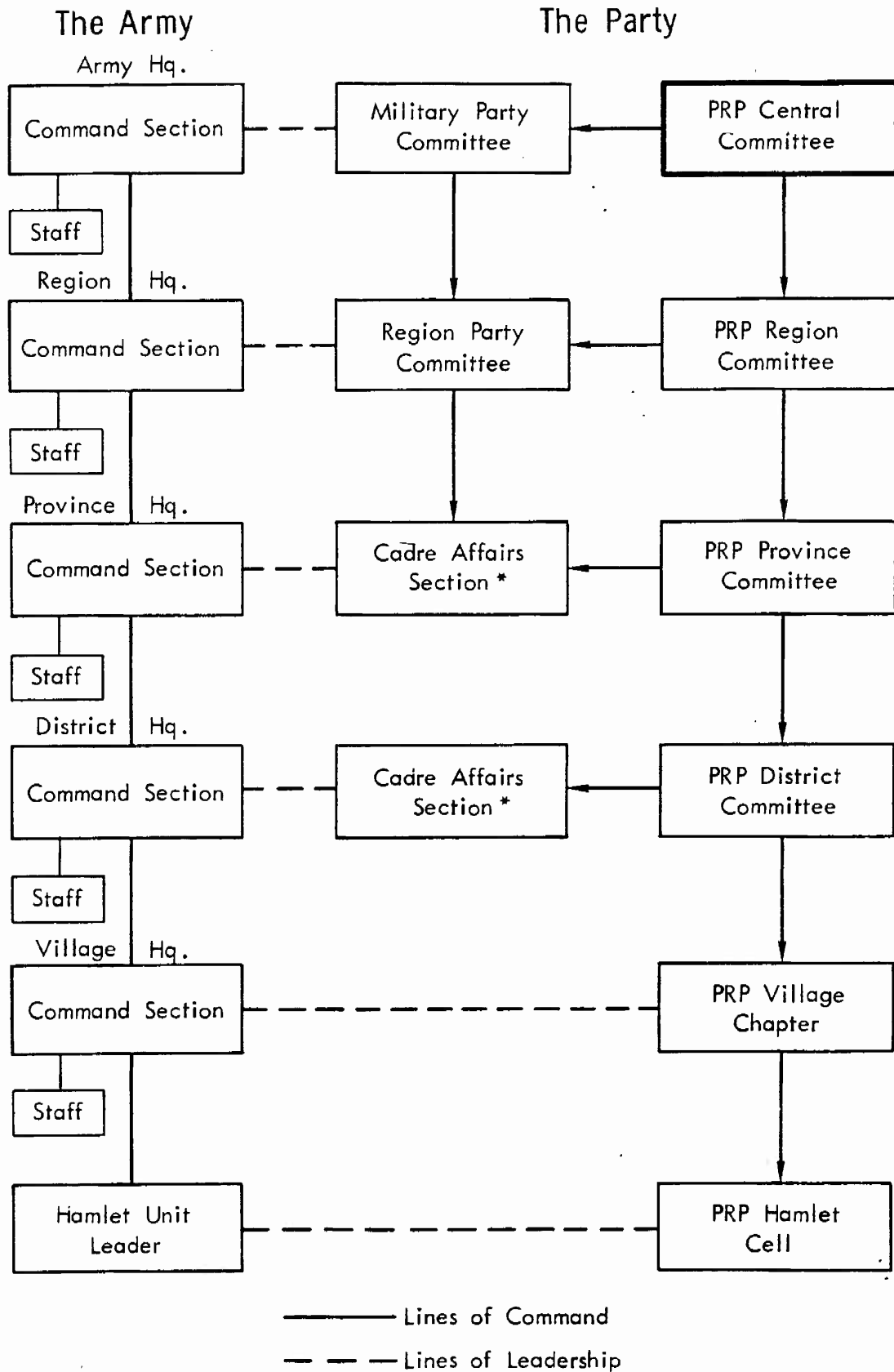
The PRP Parastructure in the Liberation Army

Figure 4 also shows that at each territorial level there is a horizontal chain of PRP groups that correspond to the territorial organizations. The PRP groups that parallel the command echelons consist of the members of the command sections of Army Hq. and of the territorial headquarters. They are called the Military Party Committees at Army and Region Headquarters echelons and Cadre Affairs Sections at the Province and District levels.² At the village and hamlet levels there are no special PRP groups; PRP members of the village and hamlet military organizations are members of either the PRP village chapter or the PRP hamlet cell.

The large PRP membership in the staff sections of the headquarters and in the combat units are also organized into PRP groups. The approximately 600 PRP members in the staff section of Army Headquarters are organized into Party cells, chapters and inter-chapters. All of

¹The highest decisionmaking body within the PRP is the Party Congress. (Pike, Viet Cong, p. 416.)

²It is not clear whether these groups also include some non-military members of the corresponding territorial PRP Committee.



*Also known as Coordination Operations Section

Fig.4—The PRP organization

these are subordinated to the Staff Section Party Committee, which in turn is under the Military Party Committee. A similar PRP organization exists in the other territorial headquarters. (See Fig. 5.)

The PRP organization corresponding to a Liberation Army battalion is shown in Fig. 6. The approximately 120 PRP members in the subordinate units of the battalion are organized into PRP cells and chapters. The battalion Party Committee, sometimes called the Command Committee, is the highest decisionmaking body within the PRP organization at battalion level.¹ A similar Party organization exists in Army regiments.

We will call the Party organization shown in Figs. 5 and 6 the PRP parastructure in the Liberation Army, that is, a Party organization that parallels the organization of the Army and consists of PRP members who are also members of the Army. The higher levels of the parastructure, that is, the Military Party Committees, the Cadre Affairs Sections, and the regimental and battalion Party Committees, participate in decisionmaking; the lower levels of the parastructure, among other tasks, monitor the implementation of policies adopted by the decision-making bodies.²

In Figs. 4, 5, and 6 the solid lines represent lines of military command. The dashed lines represent the decisionmaking and monitoring by the Party parastructure of the Army.

The leadership in the Party parastructure is reserved for the political officers, and the commanders of the battalion and of the

¹A similar Party organization exists in North Vietnamese battalions:

Lowest echelon was the Lao Dong Party cell organized at platoon level and including all party members in the platoon; the platoon (leader) was the cell chief. At company level there was a party chapter organized within each company, the Chapter Secretary was the Company Political officer....At battalion level there was a Battalion Party Committee, the Secretary of which was the Battalion Political Officer.

²For a more extensive discussion of the decisionmaking and monitoring see the end of this section.

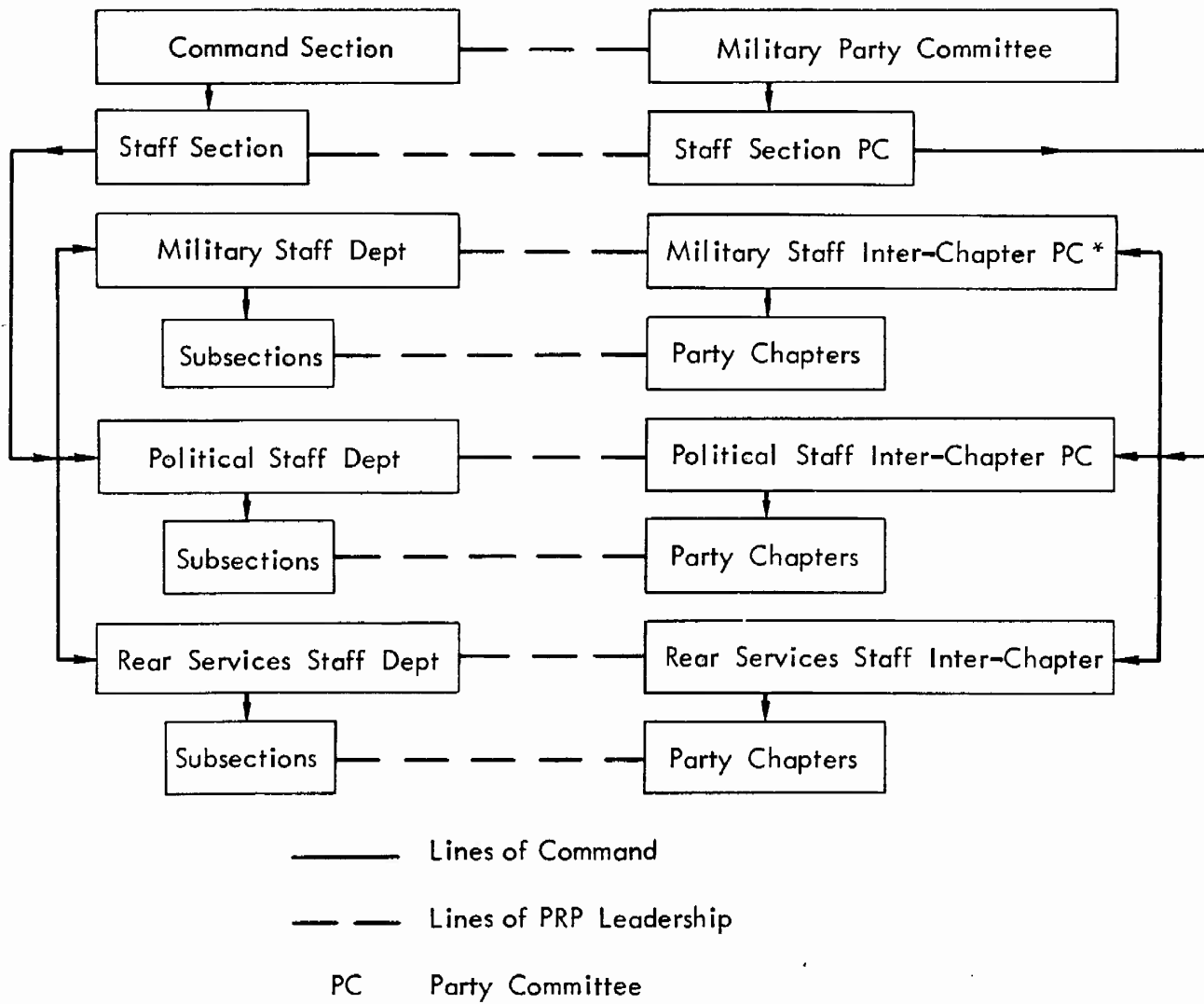


Fig.5—PRP parastructure in Liberation Army Hq

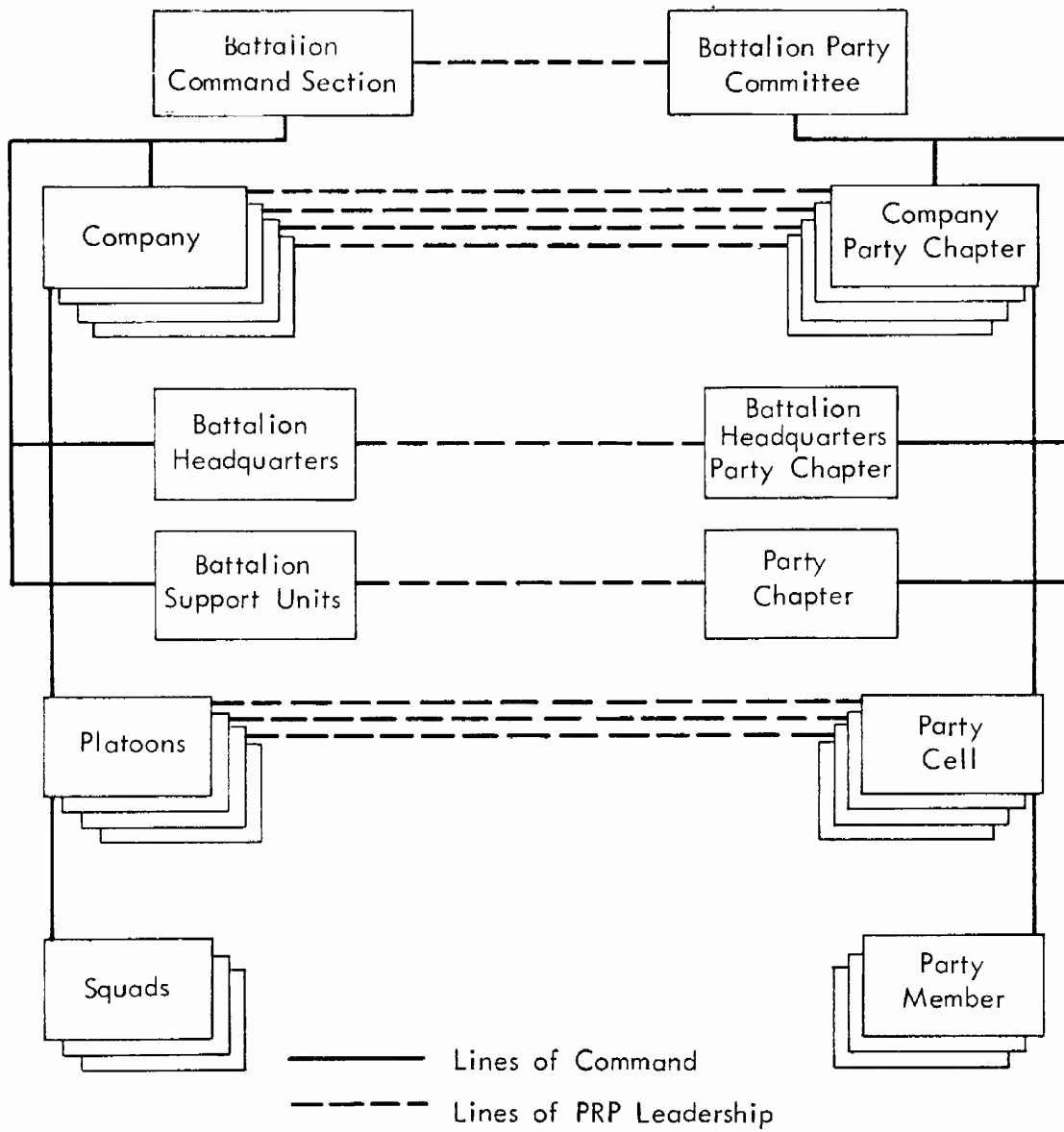


Fig.6—PRP parastructure in a battalion

(Source: US 353-66/1211)

companies are simply members of the committee and chapters. The battalion political officer and his assistant are, respectively, the secretary and assistant secretary of the battalion Party Committee. The company political officer is the secretary of the company Party Chapter. The platoon leader or assistant platoon leader often was the Party Cell leader at the platoon level.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE NLF AND THE PRP TO THE LIBERATION ARMY

The Communist Image of the Party and the State

According to a staff officer of the Army, there are three structurally independent organizations: The NLF committees "are the overt administrative body responsible for civil administration within the areas controlled and semi-controlled"¹ by the insurgents. The Liberation Army is an organization formally distinct from both the PRP and NLF: "There is a chain of command or an administrative system in the Liberation Army and the Front." However, the PRP plays a key role because "the Party is responsible for the leadership of the country." Both the Liberation Army and the NLF "acknowledge the Party Leadership...."²

This interpretation is consistent with what we know about the governments, armies, and the communist parties of the USSR and Mainland China. Lenin pointed out in 1919:

The functions of Party collectives and the functions of state organs...should never be confused.... The Party

¹US 353-66/1211.

²There are two additional interpretations of the relationship of the military territorial headquarters to the PRP and to the NLF. A study, VC Political Infrastructure, published by the U.S. Military Command in South Vietnam, asserts that the military headquarters at every territorial level are merely subcommittees of the corresponding territorial PRP committee. However, the document is more ambiguous in a passage in which it stresses the contrast between theory and practice:

In theory, the Front committee at the regional level is responsible for all policy and activities within the boundaries of the region. However, in practice, the PRP

should implement its decisions through Soviet (that is, state) organs, within the framework of the Soviet Constitution. The Party tries to guide the activity of the Soviets, not to be a substitute for them.¹

F. Schurmann writes that according to Communist ideology in China and the Soviet Union:

The state is bureaucracy, army, law; the body of organized formal instruments from which commands flow... the Party is not construed as an element of the apparatus of state.... But it is the Party which leads and controls the state....²

Both passages stress that some functions of the state -- decision-making, guidance, leadership and control -- have been abrogated by the Party in the socialist states. However, the bulk of the remaining functions -- detailed planning, administration, the chain of commands -- remain the prerogatives of the state.

More relevant to our study is the relationship between the Party and the shadow organs of state during a "War of National Liberation," that is, before the Party's advent to power. In time of war, the Party sometimes shortcuts the organs of state and performs functions that should be reserved for the state according to Communist ideology. (That is, apparently, frequent in the case of the NLF.) The short-cutting of the organs of state occurred, for example, in 1928 in the Communist controlled areas of Hunan-Kiangsi. At that time Mao Tse-tung criticized the Party for failing to maintain the distinction between the Party and the organs of state:

The Party enjoys immense prestige and authority among the masses, the government much less. The reason is that

committee is in overall control of both political and military affairs, and issues directives through the Front Committee. (VC Political Infrastructure, p. 29.)

D. Pike argues that the military territorial headquarters are subordinated to the territorial committees of the NLF (Viet Cong, pp. 212-213).

¹Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Manual, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1963, p. 526.

²F. Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, pp. 109-110.

for the sake of convenience the Party handles many things directly and brushes aside the government bodies. There are many such instances. In some places there are no leading Party members' groups in the government organizations, while in others they exist but are not functioning properly. From now on the Party must carry out its task of giving leadership to the government; with the exception of propaganda, the Party's policies and the measures it recommends must be carried out through the government organizations.¹

The National Liberation Front and the Liberation Army

The National Liberation Front serves many functions.² Here we shall be concerned only with the relationship between the NLF in its role as an organ of civil administration, and the Liberation Army. The NLF is responsible for some administrative functions within those areas of South Vietnam controlled or partially controlled by the Viet Cong. According to a former officer of the Liberation Army, the NLF "contains sections which would function as the national and local administration in any country."

At the apex of the NLF organization is the NLF Central Committee. Below the Central Committee are NLF territorial committees for regions, provinces, districts, villages and hamlets.³ The territorial divisions for administration are identical to the military divisions. At each territorial level, one of the members of the NLF Committee is a representative from the Liberation Army. From the NLF Committee the

¹Our emphasis. Mao Tse-tung, Selected Military Writings, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1963, p. 33.

²D. Pike's book, Viet Cong, traces in detail the many functions of the NLF organization.

³According to a regroupee, Le Xuan Chuyen, Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations, in a Liberation Army division, "There is a chain of command or an administrative system in the Liberation Army and the Front." However some U.S. authorities deny that in the NLF a lower level territorial committee receives orders from a higher level NLF Committee. According to this interpretation, commands reach a territorial NLF Committee from the corresponding territorial PRP Committee. Thus the NLF is regarded as merely a "front" organization, that is, a facade for the PRP. (See MACJ 236-1, VC Political Infrastructure.)

military representative receives information on problems that are of interest to the Liberation Army.

According to Pike, the NLF Central Committee, as well as the territorial committees of the NLF, "...direct the violence program and encourage and develop military and paramilitary capability throughout the country." He adds, "Some Vietnamese and some Americans believe that the NLF army was a separate and autonomous arm independent of the (NLF) Central Committee and its Presidium and perhaps reporting directly to Hanoi, but there is little evidence of such a separation."¹ Pike turns to the NLF Provincial committee and states, "Its second major job was to administer the violence program, the armed struggle, and to make decisions for assassinations and acts of sabotage and subversion as well as for military attacks by military and paramilitary units."² The author adds that according to organizational charts there were five sections organized under the NLF Provincial committee; one of these sections is "the Liberation Army provincial staff headquarters, which administered the violence program."³

In the documents we have examined we have found no evidence that the NLF organization directs or controls the Liberation Army. As will be seen in the next section, we have found much evidence showing that the PRP exercises "leadership" over the Liberation Army.

The PRP and the Liberation Army

Party leadership. The concept of Party leadership of the Liberation Army includes decisionmaking as well as monitoring of the implementation of the decisions at all levels of the Army organization. The organs of decisionmaking consist of the highest echelons of the PRP parastructure, that is, the Military Party Committees and the Cadre Affairs Sections and of the territorial committees of the PRP.

¹ Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 212-213.

² Ibid., p. 221.

³ Ibid., footnote, p. 221.

The monitoring of the implementation of the decisions is the task of the remaining echelons of the Party parastructure. The Party exercises effective leadership over the Army -- and over the NLF -- because all of the Army officers in command positions are members of the PRP, because there are PRP members at all levels of the Army organization down to the level of squads, and because all of these Party members, as a consequence of Party discipline, that is "democratic centralism," must fully support the implementation of Party decisions.¹

The command section of a territorial headquarters convenes as the Military Party Committee or as the Cadre Affairs Section, which are Party institutions. These party groups, together with the territorial Party Committee, jointly determine policy. The Party policy is communicated to all Party members and "is received by members of the military, not because of their command position (in the Liberation Army), but because of their position within the respective party structure, which parallels the Army structure." Consequently, the commanders at every level in the Army will implement the policies of the Party, which they are bound to follow as members of the PRP.

In any military organization the policies determined by the decisionmakers must be translated into operational plans by the Staff and subsequently executed. For many reasons, an organization may fail in the process of translation of the policy into action. In the Army the correct implementation of Party policies is assured through the existence of the PRP parastructure. Party members are present not only at decisionmaking levels of the Liberation Army but also at levels where the policies are translated into operational plans and

¹The Regulations of the Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Party state in Article 10:

Party decisions agreed by the majority (of the persons present) in a meeting are opted. All Party decisions must be executed without condition. Party members must obey the Party organization, the minority must obey the majority, lower echelons must obey the higher echelons and the whole Party must obey the center.

subsequently executed. These party members, at the lower levels of the Army organization, are charged with the task of communicating to non-Party members the correct interpretation of the policy, translation of the policies into action, and reporting to the Party on the results of the translation. The Party members in the combat units of the Army have an additional obligation to serve as examples to non-Party members. They had to be more courageous in combat than others and retreat last.¹

Rules for decisionmaking at the military headquarters level.² The Military Party Committee and the Cadre Affairs Section³ are under "direct leadership" of the corresponding territorial Party Committee. The Cadre Affairs Section, in contrast to the Military Party Committee, is merely a section of the corresponding territorial Party Committee and exercises authority delegated by the Provincial or District Party Committee. The Military Party Committee and Cadre Affairs Section differ in their authority to issue commands to lower echelon Military Party groups. A Military Party Committee can issue orders or directives to a lower echelon Military Party Committee or Cadre Affairs Section. However, a Cadre Affairs Section cannot issue orders; it can only "guide" a lower echelon Cadre Affairs Section. Consequently, the lines of command stop at the Province Cadre Affairs Section; below

¹Party members were expelled from the PRP for "...not being as courageous in combat as non-Party members or retreating before non-Party members do;" (AG-426). A platoon leader states:

As the number of Party members was reduced, the combat ability of the unit also diminished. During combat, it was the Party members who led the fight. They were the ones who were willing to risk their lives to destroy the enemy's firepower. Thus the performance of a unit depended a lot on the number of Party members in it. (AG-42.)

²This section is based on the contents of a captured document, "Regulations for the Party Committee System in the South Vietnamese Liberation Army.

³These Party groups consist of members of the command section of the military headquarters and some members of the corresponding PRP territorial Party Committee.

this level the lines of command flow only through the territorial Party Committees. (See Fig. 4.)

The Province Cadre Affairs Section, for example, may receive directives and guidelines from the Region Military Party Committee and from the Province Party Committee. The Province Cadre Affairs Section drafts plans implementing the directives and sends them for discussion and approval to the Province Party Committee. If the Province Party Committee approves the plan, it is disseminated for execution to the appropriate lower echelon groups in the organization.

If conflicting directives from the region Military Party Committee and the Province Party Committee reach the Province Cadre Affairs Section, the issues must be resolved through discussion between the Military Party Committee and the Party Committee at the Regional level. In case of emergency, when there is no time for the resolution of the conflict at regional level, the Province Cadre Affairs Section must follow the directives of the Province Party Committee.

The procedures at province level described above apply to the decisionmaking at every level of the organization from the Military Party Committee and the Central Party Committee down to the Cadre Affairs Section and the Party Committee at the district level. The only difference in the procedure at lower levels of the Party organization was described above: The District Cadre Affairs Section does not receive directives from the Province Cadre Affairs Section and does not issue directives to the village organization.¹

¹It is of interest to note that the captured document refers to two Party groups of higher echelon than the South Vietnamese Military Party Committee and the PRP Central Committee:

The South Vietnamese Military Party Committee must execute all decisions made by the PRP Central Committee... and at the same time execute the orders from the Military Party Department and Politburo. In case a decision made by the Military Party Department is not agreed to by the PRP Party Committee, the Military Party Committee must report to the Military Party Department while the PRP Party Committee will report to C Party Committee (and in the

Decisionmaking at Province level. A policy directive from the PRP Central Committee may be transmitted to a Province headquarters through two lines of communication. It may reach the Province headquarters from the PRP Central Committee through the PRP region and Province committees and finally the Cadre Affairs Section (see Fig. 4) The communication of policy directives through party channels is described in the following passage:

One requirement is from the Region 3 Party Committee to the Vinh Binh Province which represents broad requirements for the Province Party Committee and includes requirements for all areas of activities of the Province Party Committee, including the requirements for the Province Military Affairs Committee. Upon receipt of the requirement the Cadre Affairs Section members review the requirement. A meeting is called by the Province Party Executive Committee and certain members of the section are invited to attend the meeting for guidance. After the meeting the section members return to their committees and the Cadre Affairs Section meets to review the decision of the Province Party Committee. Concurrently, because each of the section members also is a section or subsection chief he is charged with implementing that which falls under his area of responsibility.¹

Or the policy directive may be transmitted from the Central Committee to the Liberation Army headquarters and then through military channels to the region and Province military headquarters. Both of these lines of communication may be used concurrently.²

The interaction between the military and the Province Party Committee continues throughout the planning stage. The staff of the province Military Affairs Committee³ responds to the policy directive

meantime the Military Party Committee) must comply with the recommendations of the PRP Central Committee Current Affairs Committee and at the same time report to C for instructions.

It may be the case that the Military Party Department is the Lao Dong -- that is the Communist Party of North Vietnam -- equivalent of the South Vietnamese Military Party Committee and the Politburo and C Party Committee or C may be the Central Committee of the Lao Dong.

¹Section or subsection chiefs may refer to the military organization.

²MACJ 236-1, VC Political Infrastructure, p. 26.

³The terms, "Military Affairs Committee" or "Section," occur very frequently in captured documents and interviews. Two ambiguities are

by submitting a preliminary plan to the head of the Province Military Affairs Committee. A former staff member of the Committee describes the sequence of activities resulting in an operational plan:

After studying the proposal, I report to the head of the Provincial Military Affairs Committee. He then studies it from all points of view, considering especially the political effects, and the relative capabilities of our forces and those of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. If he approves of the proposed operation he presents it to the Secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party. The Secretary studies it and if he thinks it sound he calls a meeting of the whole Party Committee to study, discuss, and perhaps approve the proposal.¹

If the proposal, that is, the preliminary plan for an operation, is approved by the Province Party Committee, the detailed study of military, political, and logistic aspects of the proposed operation is turned over to the staff of the military headquarters. The former staff member continues:

When all is done, the Military Affairs Committee holds another meeting. This will be attended by the leaders of all the units that will be involved in the attack. If the majority of the Committee believes that the attack should be made, they report to another meeting of the Provincial Party Committee, which again reviews the proposed problem and the solution and perhaps directs some additional action. The Party Committee will approve the attack only

apparent in the usage of these terms: 1. Sometimes the Military Affairs Committee or Section is identified as the command section of the territorial military headquarters -- see the interrogation of Le Xuan Chuyen. At other times it is apparent that the term is equivalent to the military headquarters -- that is, the command section and the three staff departments. 2. Is the Military Affairs Committee or Section a military or a political institution or both? We have discussed the "double-hats" roles of the members of the command section: They can meet as the command section -- a military institution -- or most of the members of the command section with some additional members of the territorial Party Committee can meet as the Military Party Committee or the Cadre Affairs Section -- a Party institution. The terms, Military Affairs Committee or Section, do not distinguish between the military and Party aspects of this group.

¹VC Political Infrastructure, p. 25.

if all conditions -- political, military and logistic -- appear favorable.¹

If the operational plans developed by the Province military headquarters are approved by the Province PRP Committee, the plans are sent to the battalion under the command of the Province headquarters. Plans drawn up by a Region headquarters are first sent to Regimental headquarters which in turn transmits them to the subordinate battalions. Finally, the individual combat units develop detailed plans for the implementation of the operational plan.

COMMAND AND DECISIONMAKING IN A BATTALION²

As on all levels of the Liberation Army, there is a distinction between the command function and the decisionmaking, that is, "leadership" by the PRP parastructure. The battalion commander, his assistant, the political officer, and his assistant are the most important members of the battalion command section. The commander exercises authority in all military matters and on the battlefield and the political officer makes decisions in case of "political" questions.³

The PRP parastructure in a battalion was shown in Fig. 6. The PRP members of each company form a Party Chapter. All Party Chapters are under the control of the Battalion Party Committee. This committee is composed of five members: a secretary, who is the political officer of the battalion, the battalion commander, the assistant commander, the assistant political officers, and a company leader.⁴ It is important to note that the battalion commander is simply a member of the committee and that the political officer is the secretary, that is,

¹Ibid. Note that no mention is made of the intermediary role played by the Cadre Affairs Section of the PRP. According to other documents, the Section should meet with the Province Party Committee.

²The system of command and decisionmaking described in this section applies also to regiments and divisions.

³DT-70. In the Chinese Red Army this division of labor is referred to as dual leadership.

⁴The Party Committee may include other members.

the chairman, of the committee. Both officers are important members of the committee and of the command section. As was pointed out before, the commander and the political officer, as members of the PRP, are bound to implement the decisions of the committee.

The Battalion Party Committee, sometimes called the Command Committee, is a PRP organization that makes all important decisions through "collective leadership."¹ It "sets forth policy lines and operational plans that are carried out by the Command Staff."² Another captured document states that in combat units "all important decisions must be discussed and approved by the Party Committee before the military and political commanders in charge may execute them." However, collective leadership does not necessarily slow down the reaction time of Liberation Army combat units, because "in case of emergency when immediate decisions must be taken, the commanders may take appropriate measures and must be responsible to the Party Committee."³

If the battalion is subordinate to a regiment, operational plans are received from the regimental command staff.⁴ Province battalions receive their operational plans from the Province Military Affairs Committee. When an operational plan is received, the battalion staff meets to study any difficulties that may arise in implementation. Then the Battalion Party Committee meets to examine opinions from the staff and to decide what operations should be carried out.⁵

¹The Battalion Party Committee's role in decisionmaking may explain why up till now few or none of the Liberation Army combat units have defected to the GVN side. A decision to defect would have to be made by the Party Committee. That is, both the commander and the political officer would have to agree to the defection of the unit.

²AG-426.

³Mao Tse-Tung states this principle more clearly:

In the army, the person in command has the right to make emergency decisions during battle and when circumstances require. (Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, International Publishers, New York, 1954, Vol. V, p. 268).

⁴AG-426.

⁵AG-426.

In the committee the political officer represents the political aspect of a proposed operation. He considers the morale of friendly and enemy troops, the political effect the operation will have on the friendly and enemy population and administration. He may also discuss the expected collateral damage to the civilian population resulting from the planned operation.

We have no information on the procedure through which the committee comes to a decision. If the committee follows the regulations of the PRP, the decisions are made by the majority voting in the committee. We have no information on the privileged status of the political officer in his role as the secretary of the committee.¹

Based on a Party document prescribing procedures for conflict resolution between the Military Party Committee and the corresponding territorial Party Committee, we can suggest the following rules for the resolution of a conflict between the battalion commander and his political officer: If there is no emergency and if the political officer disagrees with the military officer on a matter of military policy, the issue is referred for resolution to a higher echelon of command. In the meantime the military officer cannot proceed with the implementation of his policy. If the battalion is subordinate to a regiment, the military officer reports to the regimental commander and the battalion political officer reports to the regimental political officer; then the issue is resolved in the regimental Party Committee.

¹In the Viet Minh Army, "in case of a disagreement, the political officer had the power to make the decision." Bernard Fall, Le Viet-Minh, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1960, p. 190.

However, the primacy of the political officers in the North Vietnamese army was not established without a struggle. According to P. J. Honey, "Giap resisted Truong Chinh's efforts to impose a tight system of party control upon the army...but he was obliged to make important concessions to Chinh. In 1949 Giap refused to admit that political commissars were necessary in the army, but it was Chinh who prevailed, and by the end of the war the power of the military political commissars was very great indeed." (P. J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, p. 30.)

If the battalion is subordinate to a province headquarters, the military officer and political officer report to their superiors in the headquarters and the issue is resolved in the Cadre Affairs Section of the Province headquarters.

THE CHINESE MODEL

In this and the previous section we described the structure of the Liberation Army and the complex dual system, military and political, built into it. The military system of control is analogous to the system functioning in Western armies. The political system, consisting of the Party parastructure, the political officers in the Liberation Army and the territorial Party Committees, is foreign to Western military tradition.

The dual system in the Liberation Army is very closely patterned after the dual system in the Chinese Communist Army and the North Vietnamese Army.¹ This is not surprising if we recall the origins of the Viet Minh Main Force regiments and divisions during 1949-1950, after the Chinese Communist Army reached the border of Vietnam. The Viet Minh forces were equipped and trained in the mountainous jungles of North Vietnam adjacent to the Chinese frontier by Chinese advisors and, perhaps, also across the border in China. The political and military leaders of the Viet Minh, before 1945, spent much time in China and some studied in Communist Chinese military schools.² It is also understandable why the Chinese Communist Army, after the victorious

¹The following references describe the dual system in the Chinese Communist Army as it existed from 1928 to the present: Ellis Joffee, "The Conflict between Old and New in the Chinese Army," The China Quarterly, No. 18, April-June 1964; and the same author's Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949-1964, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard East Asian Monographs, No. 19, 1965; Alexander L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, The Korean War and Its Aftermath, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1967; Ralph L. Powell, Politico-Military Relationships in Communist China, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, United States Department of State.

²"The Viet-Minh commander in chief and some of the senior Viet-Minh commanders, such as the late General Nguyen-Son, had actually undergone training at Yen-an; other officers had graduated from Whampoa,

conclusion of its long war in 1949, should serve as a model for the Viet Minh who were at that time waging a protracted war against the French Army.¹

Conflicts in the Liberation Army

After the Korean war some officers in the Chinese Red Army argued that collective leadership through Party Committees and the role of the political officer in decisionmaking were incompatible with the requirements of a modern army and that, consequently, the Chinese Army should modify its dual system and pattern itself after the Soviet model. The supporters of the dual system argued that the Army should retain its "Red" character, and the opponents that it should become an expert army.²

In the documents and interviews we have examined we found little evidence of doctrinal disagreement on the role of political officers and of collective leadership in decisionmaking in the Liberation Army. Occasionally we have found that some officers and fighters resented the power of political officers. For example, a rallier stated that "contradictions" existed between military and political cadres:

According to the Party system, the political cadres are responsible for the political positions. Regardless

and most of the rising regimental commanders had attended at least a brief training course at Nanning, Ching-hsi, or Long-Chow [sic] when the new regular (Viet-Minh) regiments and divisions were formed in Red China." (Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, A Political and Military Analysis, Frederick A. Praeger, New York and London, 1963, p. 111.)

It is important to note that General Nguyen Chi Thanh stayed at the Chinese Communist Hq in Yen-an from 1941 to 1945. He was Chief of the North Vietnamese Army Political Directorate during the period 1953-1961 and is credited with the introduction of the political system in the North Vietnamese Army. (P. J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, pp. 30-31.) In 1965 he became Commander in Chief and Political Officer of the Liberation Army.

¹However, we do not imply that the Viet Minh and later the North Vietnamese Army and the Liberation Army were either subservient to China or indiscriminately copied the Chinese pattern.

²Ellis Joffe, Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949-1964, p. 61.

of the size of the organization, they have the highest authority in every activity of the unit, although their military rank is lower than the military cadres (in charge of the unit). Because of this, there have been ill feelings caused among a number of military cadres who have much experience and ability, especially those whose rank is higher (than that of the political cadres).

The system of collective leadership functioned well in the Chinese Red Army prior to 1949:

Despite the potential incompatibility of political controls with professional leadership, there is little doubt that the system functioned well during the period of guerrilla warfare and in the early years of the Communist regime. Three reasons seem to account for this harmony. First, both the commanders and the commissars were veteran Party members with much the same experience and background in both political and military work. Second, the close interrelation of political and military tasks in the milieu of insurrection gave little basis for conflict. Third, in many cases the commander and the commissar were one and the same person.¹

The first two reasons, at least, seem to apply to the Liberation Army in South Vietnam and may explain why we have found no clear evidence of doctrinal conflicts between the military and political officers.

The officers of the Liberation Army have a relatively uniform sociological background. They come predominantly from the rural areas of South Vietnam and probably more than half had formerly been workers and poor farmers.² Many of the officers in the Local and Main Forces

¹E. Joffe, "Conflict Between Old and New," p. 129.

²A document captured in 1963 states that in Western Nam Bo 78 percent of the members of the Liberation Army are workers and farmers. In provincial companies 47 percent are workers and poor farmers and 53 percent are middle farmers. All members of the militia platoons are workers and farmers. Nearly 60 percent and sometimes 90 percent of the membership of units of the Liberation Army is made up of poor and middle-class farmers. Because Party membership is a prerequisite for command positions in the Liberation Army and because Party admission requirements are easier for men who are poor farmers, it is likely that the percentage of workers and poor farmers in the Liberation Army officer corps is still higher.

originally served as guerrillas under the control of village authorities. And the officers, as Party members, have been taught to accept the primacy of political control in the army.¹

We have shown that the political officers have a military background. They are initially selected from platoon military cadres. They may have served as military officers at some point in their career and they have received further military training in addition to political instruction.

¹A. George, in his study of the Chinese Red Army, that is, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), points out: "It should be remembered that these combat leaders were not steeped in the same tradition of unified command that exists in Western armies. Rather, they had been conditioned from the time of their entrance into the PLA, and as they advanced into command positions, to accept the commissar system as an integral and valuable aspect of PLA organization. Their conception of the role of a military commander was significantly different from that which a unit commander in a Western army brings to his task. In the PLA military cadres were indoctrinated to accept the dictum that 'politics is supreme'." (A. L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, pp. 114-115.)

IV. FUNCTIONS OF THE POLITICAL-MILITARY ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

In Sections II and III we discussed the dual organizational system of the Liberation Army. It is possible that the dual system has no operational consequences and that if the political institutions were to be abolished in the Army, it would continue to perform its tasks without any change in effectiveness. For example, if all the members of the Battalion Party Committee were to agree invariably with the military commander then the dual structure would not influence military operations. Although the evidence we have on the decisionmaking process is fragmentary, we believe that the dual system does have important operational consequences.¹

In this section, we examine briefly some of the major functions that provide a rationale for the dual system. We argue that the political elements of the Army are important agencies in transforming peasants into effective soldiers and cadres, that the dual system forces explicit consideration of the political consequences of military operations, and finally that the dual system enhances Viet Cong ability to learn, innovate, and adapt in a changing environment.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE PEASANT

One of the roles of the political system in the Army becomes apparent when we study the efforts of the Party and the political

¹We might be able to relate the decisionmaking to the operations of the Liberation Army if we had detailed representative case histories of the transformation of policy directives into combat operations. Such case histories, especially at echelons of command higher than battalion level, would have to include accounts of what happens in the Party Committees as the policy directive or operational plan is discussed. We ought to know what positions are taken by the various members of the Committee -- for example, the military officer and the political officer in the Battalion Party Committee -- the arguments presented in support and against the positions, and finally how the conflict is resolved through the modification, if any, of the proposed policy directive or operational plan.

officers to reshape the thoughts and attitudes of the poor and middle farmers until they function effectively as fighters and cadres under the stress of combat operations.¹ Depending on individual potential, goals range from creating a totally committed fighter and ultimately Party member, to a temporary mobilization of those who in the long run will remain uncommitted.

The objectives of the Chinese and of the Vietnamese political and military systems in the Army are essentially the same: "...the enhancing of the 'human element' in the...Army so that morale can serve as an effective counterpoise under certain well-defined conditions to the military advantages enjoyed by better equipped foes."² In the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist armies, in contrast to other armies, considerable resources are allocated to the attempt to transform the fighters and the cadres. The never ceasing effort of the political system is expressed by a Liberation Army cadre: "The morale increased continuously since it was continuously strengthened by political indoctrination."³

We are not in a position to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts but we will sketch a few of the programs designed to achieve the stated goals. The programs intimately combine political instructions with manipulations of feelings of the troops. The political instructions present the Marxist-Leninist view of the origins, progress, chances of eventual victory, and war aims of the present struggle in Vietnam. The fighters are told about the class struggle, that is, "the difference between the landowner class and the peasant," and about the agrarian reforms policy of the Viet Cong.⁴ They are reminded that in 1945 the Resistance against the French started from scratch and after nine years of struggle against overwhelming odds was victorious in the North and that at the present time, because

¹The term fighter is Viet Cong terminology. See also Appendix E.

²A. L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, p. vi.

³AG-441.

⁴AG-426.

of Russian, Chinese, and North Vietnamese help, the Viet Cong cannot lose the war.¹

Thus the political indoctrination consists in part of a plausible analysis of the predicament of the South Vietnamese peasant under the GVN regime, an image of changed conditions if the war is won, and stress on those factors that will make victory possible. In some cases the individual response to this indoctrination has the mechanical ring of the slogans used by political officers. In other cases, Zasloff writes, "the interviewees state the goals of their struggle with deep conviction, often with eloquence:"

I fight for the same reasons I fought in the Resistance, for liberty, democracy, and equality, to stop the oppression of the poor by the rich, to end torturing, beating, and killings, to end all forms of oppression. I fight for my family to be happy, to see my country unified and independent, and not colonized as before.²

The manipulation of feelings often takes place in small groups consisting of three to six members. These cells are headed either by a Party member or a member of the Labor Youth Group; each cell meets ten to fifteen minutes each day and engages in investigating and discussing behavior of the members.³ This practice originated in the early days of the Chinese Red Army and has been compared to group therapy as practiced in the West.⁴ A member of a cell is subjected to criticism of his behavior and attitudes observed either in daily life or in the course of a military operation. He may in turn confess to his errors, that is, he may internalize the group's criticism, and may criticize himself. Furthermore, he is encouraged to criticize the other members of the group.

¹AG-363.

²Quoted in J. J. Zasloff, Political Motivation of the Viet Cong: The Viet Minh Regroupees, The RAND Corporation, RM-4703-1-ISA/ARPA, August 1966, pp. 106-107.

³M. Gurtov, The War in the Delta: Views from Three Viet Cong Battalions, The RAND Corporation, RM-5353-1-ISA/ARPA, September 1967, p. 41.

⁴"At the risk of oversimplifying matters, what took place in this respect within the PLA may be regarded as a form of group therapy..." A. L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, p. 87.

Public criticism, because it is a painful experience,¹ is the driving mechanism motivating the individual to escape the criticism through reform of his behavior.² Gurtoŭ reports that the vast majority of all respondents disliked the criticism but only one or two considered it ineffective.³ N. Leites observes that in these sessions

...blame such as it is inflicted by the Viet Cong is addressed to certain acts of the self rather than to the whole person; it implies the presence of a core in the self which, far from wholly bad, is capable of making the blameworthy acts cease; and it attempts to coerce that core into doing precisely this, with the understanding that blaming will then also end.

The men are also encouraged and exhorted either in group meetings or in individual heart-to-heart talks with the cadres or the political officer. For example, a respondent, asked what the cadres did to raise the men's fighting spirit, states:

Talking was the best we cadres could do. We would have a private talk with a man whose spirit was particularly low. I don't know if the talks were any good, but we believed that the men might feel better if they could talk about their troubles.⁴

The two elements of the transformation, the political instructions and the manipulation of emotions, are presented in several well-defined programs. The initial training of the new members of the Liberation Army consists not only of military training but also of political instructions.⁵ New members of a unit are from the beginning organized into cells that practice self-criticism.

From time to time a combat unit retired to safe areas to hold "reorientation sessions." During such sessions the men receive further

¹A respondent stated: "After all, every man had his self-respect, and when his shortcomings were brought up publicly, he was hurt." (AG-426.)

²Sometimes the criticism is counterproductive and results in desertion or rallying of the man who had been criticized. (AG-426.)

³M. Gurtoŭ, The War in the Delta, p. 42.

⁴AG-426.

⁵See Appendix E.

political and military instructions, "review their own past and let others criticize them frankly" and the cadres "help the men overcome their fears by talking and trying to motivate their spirit." The sessions end with a celebration and the men are allowed to have "a good time before getting back to work."¹

An hour before combat the political officer may call a meeting of all men, explain the importance of the operation and urge all men "to keep up their spirit and do their duty." He may explain, for example, that the operation was designed to destroy an enemy installation and "politically to liberate the people in that area." He talks about the "duty and responsibilities of the liberation fighters" and says that "the people needed them (the liberation fighters) badly at this particular time, and that if any of the men were killed in action, they would be sure that their sacrifice was not a waste and that their families and the people would benefit from it."² It is apparent that in the Liberation Army, as well as in the Chinese Army, the precombat briefings "...served to acquaint all soldiers in the unit with the nature and goals of the forthcoming action and to explain what their part in it was to be. These meetings also offered commanders and combat leaders an opportunity to create a sense of responsibility in each unit and in individual soldiers for contributing effectively to the operation."³

After a large engagement, the combat unit may withdraw to conduct a reorientation session.

If the battle had been won, the cadres would praise the men and celebrate the victory. If the battle had been lost the men had to be educated for two months in military training as well as in political training. The leading cadres had to attend [self-criticism] sessions which lasted at least one or two weeks. Sometimes they lasted for three weeks, especially if there was a dispute between the cadres as to whose fault had caused the failure.⁴

¹ AG-426.

² AG-426.

³ A. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, p. 127.

⁴ AG-426.

POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

In the Liberation Army daily life and the conduct of military operations are subject to many political constraints. For example, combat units must maintain friendly relations with the population. In planning and executing military operations the Liberation Army tries to limit damage to the civilian population and their property. To make the political constraints effective it is necessary that they be considered explicitly in the planning stage of an operation. It is equally necessary to motivate the troops and cadres to follow the political directives and to supervise lower echelons of combat units in execution.

The political officers at every level of the Liberation Army organization are responsible for the introduction of political constraints in the planning of operations and for the execution of the political directives. We have pointed out that at every stage of the planning cycle a political officer is the secretary of a committee in which the decisionmaking process takes place and that it is his job to examine all political aspects of the planned operation.

Political questions are considered even in the meeting of the battalion Command Committee just prior to a battle. A captured document states that the Committee,

...in making the decision to formally enter combat, must assess urgently and accurately the destruction of the enemy in a determined area; main direction of attack; and fundamental provisions to protect people's life and property, to promote political struggle in support of the combat operations.

Furthermore, the political officers in combat units down to company level not only disseminate the contents of political directives but also explain why it is important to execute directives correctly. For example, a directive on the treatment of U.S. prisoners states that the troops must "educate and properly take care" of the prisoners and that "we should surmount all difficulties in ensuring good

handling and correct implementation of the tolerant Revolutionary policy." The directive explains the political advantages resulting from the correct implementation of this policy: The Viet Cong will be able to exchange the U.S. prisoners for cadres held prisoners by the United States and the GVN; they will force the U.S. government to negotiate directly with Viet Cong representatives and consequently to enhance the Viet Cong's political influence in the eyes of the world. Finally, the directive points out that the peace movement in the United States is growing stronger and that the prisoners of war policy has "considerably influenced and impressed the U.S. people."

In some cases the political officer appeals not only to reason but also to the heart. Troops are instructed to identify with the people. A cadre states that he was told: "Towards the people: no stealing, not even a needle or a piece of thread."¹ A lieutenant states:

We are the people's sons. We and the people are one. We and the people are like body and shadow. Therefore we get cover and protection from the people. They do not drive us away when we come to them. Instead, they give us food and shelter.²

Specific political constraints are put into orders. For example, orders on the limitation of damage to civilian population are found even in technical manuals on the use of anti-aircraft fire. A captured document states:

In case aircraft are flying over densely populated areas where people are working or are gathered in a meeting and have not dropped bombs, air-defense elements are not permitted to shoot unless the people have withdrawn. After that shoot at aircraft only when they begin bombardment or landing of troops.

There are obvious advantages in assigning the responsibility for the execution of political directives to a semi-autonomous branch of

¹AG-500.

²K-1.

the service. First of all, the military officers are relieved from this responsibility. The political officer, though he may not have a background radically different from that of the military officer, has every incentive to exert himself in his area of responsibility. His formal rank is equal to that of the military commander of the unit and consequently he is not constrained by the military officer in the execution of his political tasks. On the other hand, his standing and possible promotion depend in good part on the assessment of his capabilities by his superiors in the political department of the Liberation Army. The assessment includes the ability of the political officer to avoid unnecessary friction with his military counterpart.¹

LEARNING, INNOVATION, ADAPTATION

We have seen that the dual system emphasizes rationality in decisionmaking and feedback in performance. Patterns of behavior, therefore, are consciously chosen after careful analysis of organizational experience.²

In Sections V, VI, and VII we shall describe the behavior and procedures of Liberation Army units between 1964-1966. These patterns of behavior and procedures did not arise from an automatic application of doctrine.

In this section we describe briefly the kind of research the Viet Cong emphasize and a few of the adaptations that have occurred. The evidence that we have on Viet Cong research and analysis, like that on decisionmaking, is fragmentary. We have no case studies tracing recognition of a problem, its analysis, solution, and the testing of the solution. Such case studies would be required for a definitive

¹In the Chinese Army, "...both military and political commanders operated under the general injunction not to hurt each others' feelings and to respect one another." A. L. George, The Chinese Communist Army in Action, p. 117.

²Presumably lessons learned from other insurgencies were conveyed to the Viet Cong by the North Vietnamese, and indirectly by the Russians and Chinese.

portrait of Viet Cong problem solving. But we can illustrate the Viet Cong emphasis on research and analysis since we do know some required types of information and some outputs -- field and training manuals, lessons learned, and so on, and we can observe learning and adaptation indirectly by examining changing behavior over a period of time.

The minutes of a military intelligence conference run by Liberation Army Headquarters suggest the importance of analysis. Cadres in research must be continually pairing and comparing the political-military capabilities of the enemy with Viet Cong capabilities. Research cadres are supposed to:

Never cease to improve their knowledge of our strategy and tactics and the enemy situation. Only by so doing will they improve their capabilities and output in the field of research....To attain decent professionalism and satisfactory capabilities, research cadres must take it upon themselves to study, analyze, and consult reference documents and manuals.

Most of all, they must learn from their daily experiences. The best training for an assessment of the enemy situation consists of making both an initial and a recapitulatory study of experience.

The Viet Cong analysts are acutely aware of the unequal quality and reliability of the information they use. They believe that a "scientific" approach is necessary to prevent the organization from being inundated with data that are undifferentiated with respect to quality and reliability. Analysts have evolved rules of thumb in working with intelligence information. Intelligence provides necessary but imperfect guidance for behavior. Viet Cong organizations must retain flexibility and hedge against surprise.¹ Even after analysis action planners must expect a large amount of erroneous information.

Based on past experience, intelligence information is only 40 percent valid. But after concentration, classification, analysis, synthesis, and ascription of significance

¹See Section V for hedging procedures.

to the matter, plus the appraisal by the Military Intelligence agencies, this degree of validity might be raised by 30 or 40 percent.

To obtain maximum yields of information, research cadres are instructed to collate all sources of information and to set up file systems that will provide a capability for collation and analysis.

All sources of information essential to the research work must be gathered and fully exploited. These include captive interrogation reports; enemy documents; intelligence collected by reconnaissance personnel, spies, technical agents, public security personnel, combat units at all levels, militia and guerrillas; information provided by the civilians, the various civil, political and Party agencies.

Methods of following up, recording, and reassessing information gathered must be improved. A registration system must be set up in the form of sketches and charts. Gradually make up fundamental files on the enemy situation, such as a file on the enemy strategic concepts and plots; a file on his organization and equipment; a file on his activity; a file on the various armed services; a file with basic data on bases, depots, roads, posts, and strategic hamlets; a file of combat tactics and techniques, survey of military terrain features, and so on.

The introduction of helicopters on a large scale created a major problem for the Viet Cong,¹ and one of the best illustrations of Viet Cong analysis is the evolution of anti-helicopter tactics. United

¹More than any other American action the Viet Cong appeared to be shaken by the introduction of troop-carrying helicopters, flown by U.S. Army and Marine crews. The total available jumped from a half dozen at the time of the Taylor mission to fifty by the end of 1962, and two hundred by mid-1964, giving the war a dramatic new dimension. It became possible for the government to put down as many as two hundred men by surprise almost anywhere in the country. This was expected to deny the Viet Cong safe havens except in uninhabited jungle. Nothing like this had ever before been attempted anywhere in the history of warfare. The Viet Cong had neither the weapons, nor the tactics, to combat chopperborne attacks. See John Mecklen, Mission in Torment, Doubleday, Garden City, 1965. See also Malcolm W. Browne, The New Face of War, Bobbs-Merrill, Kansas City, 1965, pp. 52-60.

States advisers at first believed that the introduction of helicopters would provide both an ability to detect Viet Cong units and an ability to outfight them through rapid response and mobility. The Viet Cong perceived the helicopter as a major problem and in 1962-1963 the Liberation Army did a number of studies of its combat experience.¹ The Army reacted by setting up organic anti-aircraft units and by experimenting with different tactics for shooting down helicopters.²

Through a period of hunting down the helicopters, the Army and the people of South Vietnam have grasped the technical nature of the helicopters and devised different methods of shooting at the helicopters.³

For the period covered in this study, 1964-1966, the "best" methods for downing helicopters have been incorporated into training and field manuals. For example one source states that

. . . "artillery specialists," using 12.7mm weapons at battalion level, used a formula to compute their gun laying patterns. [All he knew] of the equations was that they were based on the speed and altitude of the attacking aircraft and the muzzle velocity of the defending weapons.

Anti-aircraft techniques were much simpler at company level where the aiming point depended on the type and speed of the plane itself, for example, one was to shoot one half to one full body length ahead of the helicopter with the inclination of the weapon at such an angle that when the helicopter ran into the bullets, they would be striking around the general area of the engine.

¹See Tran Van Giau, South Vietnam Keeps Firm the Copper Wall, The Science Publishing Company, Hanoi, 1966.

²The Viet Cong also studied the experience of the Algerians against the French. Bernard Fall writes: "There can be little doubt that the experiences learned by the Algerians in anti-helicopter fighting were passed on to the North Vietnamese (and thence to the "Viet Cong" now fighting in South Vietnam) in the course of visits by Algerian Army officers to Hanoi in 1961 and by Viet Minh officers to Tunisia in April of the same year. The increasing losses of American helicopters in South Vietnam during the later part of 1962 clearly show that the Viet Minh is rapidly learning its lesson." Street Without Joy, Stockpole Company, Harrisburg, 1963, p. 261.

³The Copper Wall.

In fact one document lists the various techniques of shooting down aircraft with infantry weapons; it gives an approximation formula for computing the distance that a target must be led to achieve a hit, and it presents a firing table based on the formula for different types of aircraft. Such firing tables occur frequently in the documents we have.

Another example of analysis occurred with respect to armored personnel carriers (APCs). According to The Copper Wall:

The Liberation Army did not know the nature of this weapon and its potential. But based on their spirit of study and determination, the people's armed forces slowly created new tactics to face the APC. We tried to study how to use light weapons to destroy tanks, such as hand grenades, mines, artillery, and Molotov cocktails. We tried to get good enemy weapons such as bazookas, and recoilless guns to arm the special units to destroy APCs. And we encouraged the people to find methods to stop the APCs, such as to dig trenches, to build hills, to use mines, and spikes, in short to create a whole complex of obstacles.¹

A captured directive to the regional, provincial, and district military affairs committees of Region 2 states that the

M.113 is an objective requiring study to find out every mean, measures and weapons including rudimentary weapons and combat village to restrict, wear down or completely destroy the enemy's APC tactics.

The document discusses the methods of destroying APCs and provides guidance for the production of weapons effective against them. And it requires a report on battles with APCs to be sent up to higher echelons for analysis and the design of countermeasures.

¹The Copper Wall states that APCs were very effective when first used in Vietnam (1961). The Viet Minh had some experience with U.S. amphibious cargo carriers and landing craft used as combat vehicles. See Fall, Street Without Joy, p. 145.

A captured training document gives the technical and tactical characteristics of APCs, and the types of formations in which they are used. The document goes on to list some of the important methods of attack.

1. Use various types of grenades (including illuminating grenades), incendiary bottles, hand grenades, tromblons, and so on to throw in front of the vehicles, at their tracks and especially, into vehicles.¹
2. Use automatic rifles and machine guns to fire intensively at the sides of the vehicles. Rifles and sub-machine guns are used to kill the machine gunner in the vehicles.²
3. Use anti-tank weapons such as mines, grenades, anti-tank mines and recoilless rifles.
4. Anti-tank trenches: These trenches are dug underground of from 0.3 to 0.5m from the surface of the ground and are 5.5m to 6m in length and from 3.5m to 4m in width. They are 3.5m to 4m in depth. Explosives are placed into the trenches to destroy the vehicles when they fall into them. Trenches, stakes and mines are carefully camouflaged.
5. Obstacles: Logs, 10-20cm in radius, are driven into the ground to hinder the movement of enemy vehicles.

By 1964 the process of analysis, learning, and adaptation generated a fairly stable set of procedures in Dinh Tuong and the Delta. In these areas at least the Viet Cong did not seem to be confronted with problems requiring rapid or major innovation. According to Viet Cong analysis the GVN was both sluggish and predictable. The stable patterns of movement for long periods of time suggest the Viet Cong were not confronting rapid, unpredictable reactions to their own actions.³ Consequently, analysis, planning, and programming may have been relatively easy.

There were, of course, no U.S. troops in the Delta until very recently. Whether the Viet Cong can adapt to U.S. tactics and

¹This tactic requires highly motivated troops who will come extremely close to the target.

²Tactic 2 implies a decision to procure new weapons.

³See Section V.

technology is an extremely important question. The Viet Cong are a reacting, analytical adversary. From the U.S. perspective, the problem is to tailor organization, tactics, and technology in a way that anticipates Viet Cong reactions and makes the United States an unpredictable and effective opponent.

V. DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

The Viet Cong try to avoid contact with GVN (and U.S.) forces except at their own initiative. This objective is achieved by constant mobility and elaborate information denial procedures. The Viet Cong try to insure against the failure of such measures. They do not count on always being successful in denying information to the GVN but prepare each location for a defensive delaying operation followed by withdrawal at night. If a unit is located, a set of standard procedures aids in minimizing damage.

This section describes the standard operating procedures that insure high mobility and the procedures that attempt to insure that a unit, once located, becomes difficult to destroy. Of course, the Viet Cong do not always execute each procedure exactly nor do they follow procedures that are always successful. When they do fail, they conduct self-criticism sessions and after-action analyses. Our concern is with the structure and procedures the Viet Cong attempt to impose on their units so that these units do adapt to their environment and satisfy the requirements of strategic plans.¹

DEFINITION OF VILLAGES AND CAMPSITES

All of the land area of Dinh Tuong Province lies within the administrative boundaries of Dinh Tuong's 124 villages.² Within the village administrative areas are hamlets. On the average there are about seven hamlets per village. Hamlets are clusters of houses that stretch out for several kilometers along roads and canals. A large hamlet will have 200 families, a small one about 100. Viet Cong battalions dig fortifications in or near a hamlet within the

¹We shall use the activities of the 514th, 261st and 263rd battalions to illustrate general procedures. The structure of these units corresponds roughly to the structure described in Section II. See Appendix B.

²In Dinh Tuong, village population ranges from 1,800 to 16,600, with the average being around 5,500.

boundaries of a village.¹ This then constitutes their "camp site." Figure 7 shows the Ap Bac hamlet (camp site) in relation to Diem Hy Village. A camp site by definition includes fortifications.²

Troops, however, usually stay in the people's houses, one or two squads to a house. Theoretically a 100-family hamlet can accommodate a Viet Cong battalion.

MOBILITY

Camp Sites in Dinh Tuong Province

There appear to be three major criteria in the selection of camp sites:

(1) If at all possible they are to be established under dense foliage to avoid detection from the air.

(2) The distance between camp sites has to be a night's march or less. (The maximum march time was 14 hours in the case of the 514th battalions. Such marches did not occur frequently).

(3) The sites must have some minimum potential for defensive works.

A large number of villages in Dinh Tuong satisfy these requirements. Figure 8 shows the approximate location of camps used by the 514th battalion in 1964 and 1965. Figures 9 and 10 show camps used by the 261st and 263rd battalions when they operated in Dinh Tuong.³

¹In many cases a village is split in respect to the number of hamlets controlled by the GVN and by the Viet Cong.

²DT-118.

³These maps do not represent official intelligence estimates: The data shown were selected to illustrate patterns of Viet Cong activities. They are necessarily composites and incomplete. They were constructed from primary source material, 1964-1966.

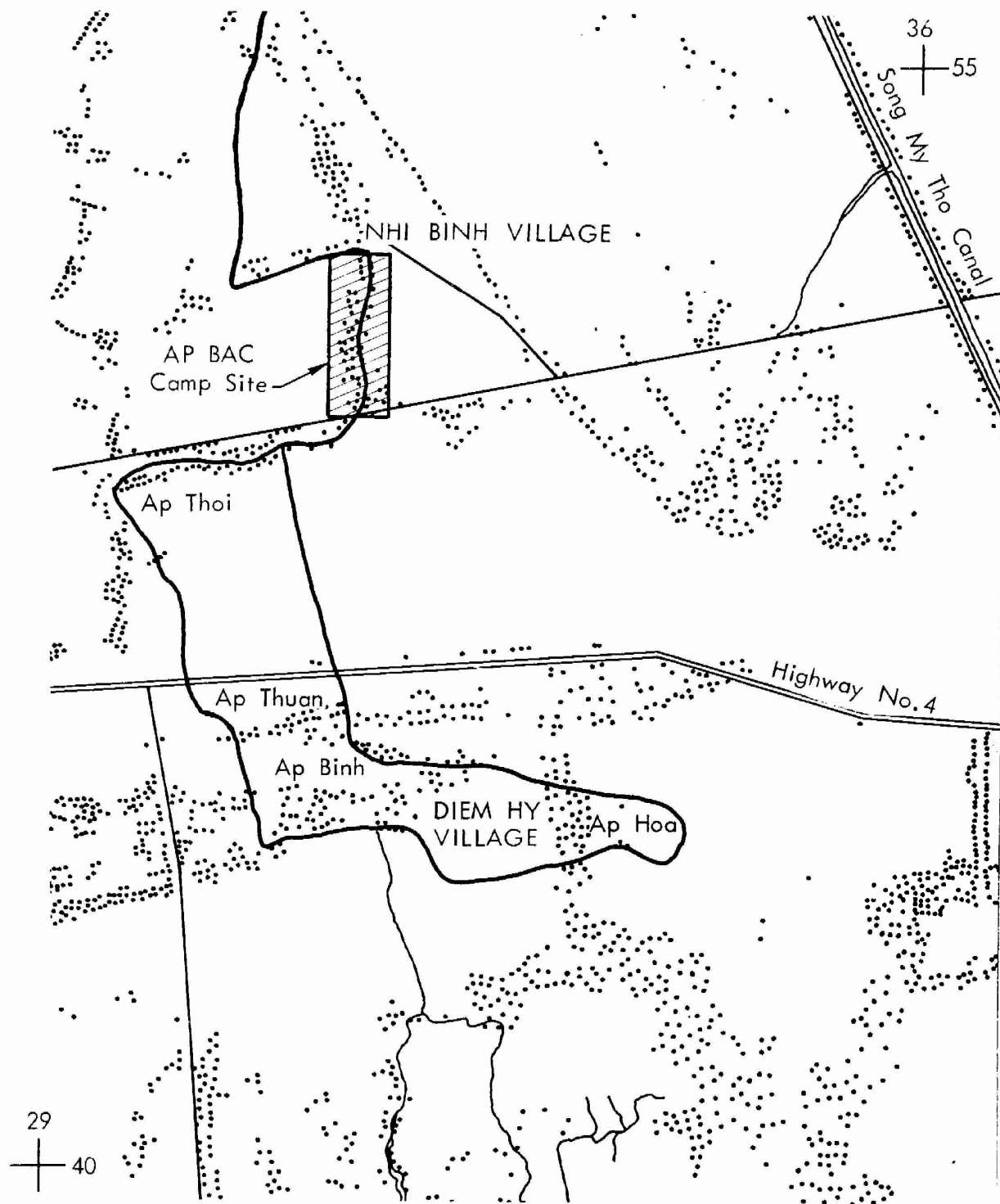
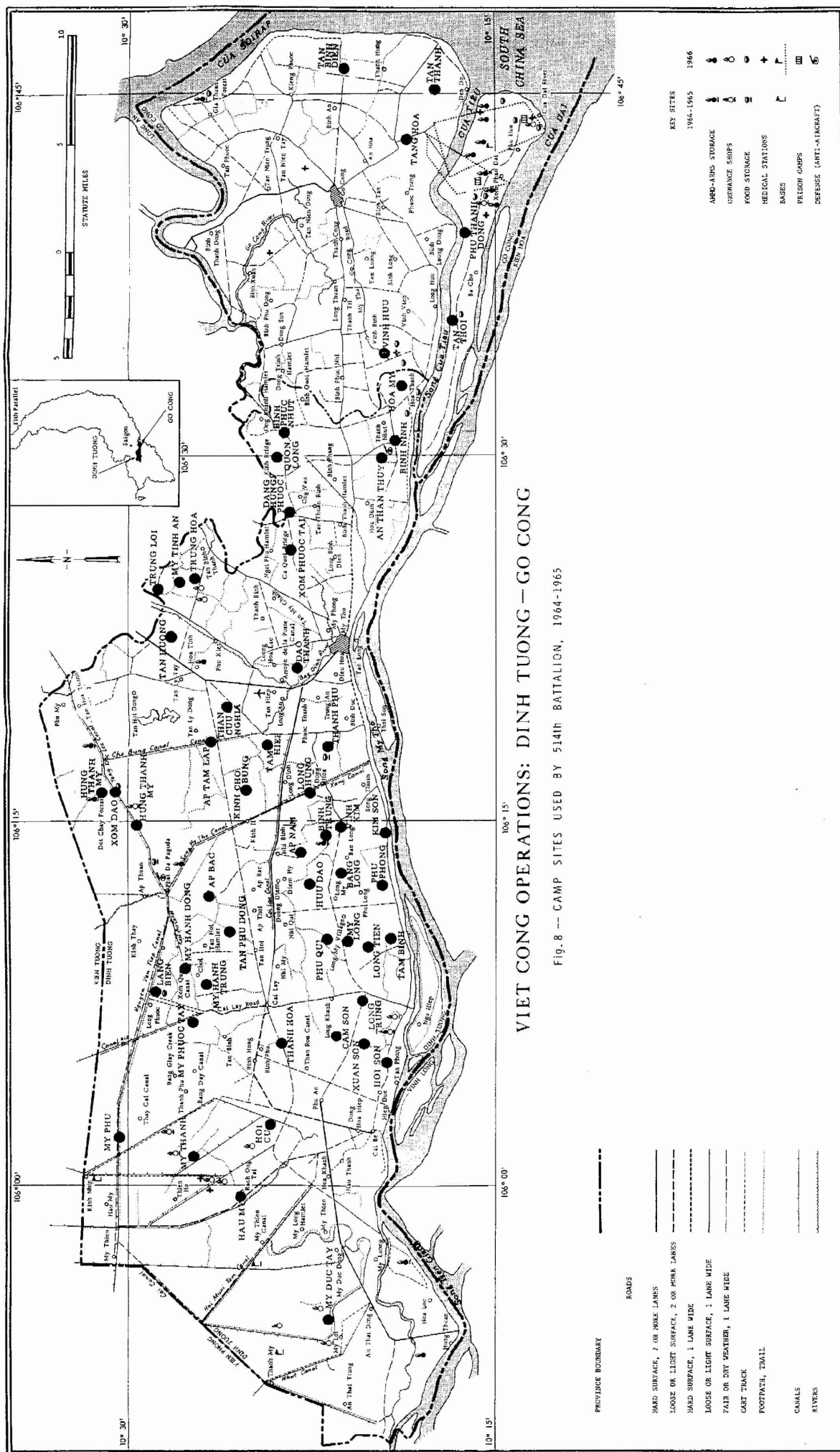
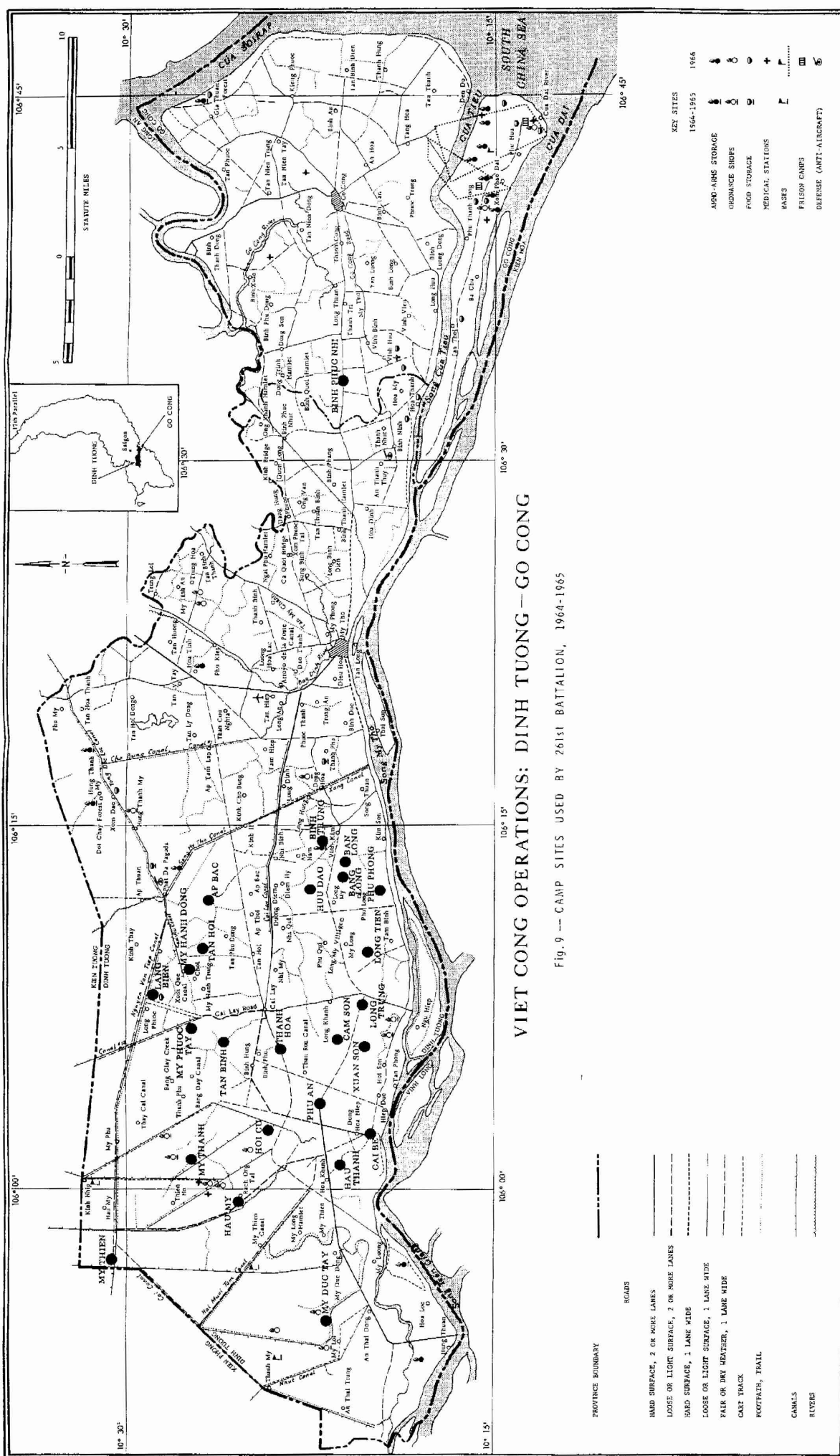
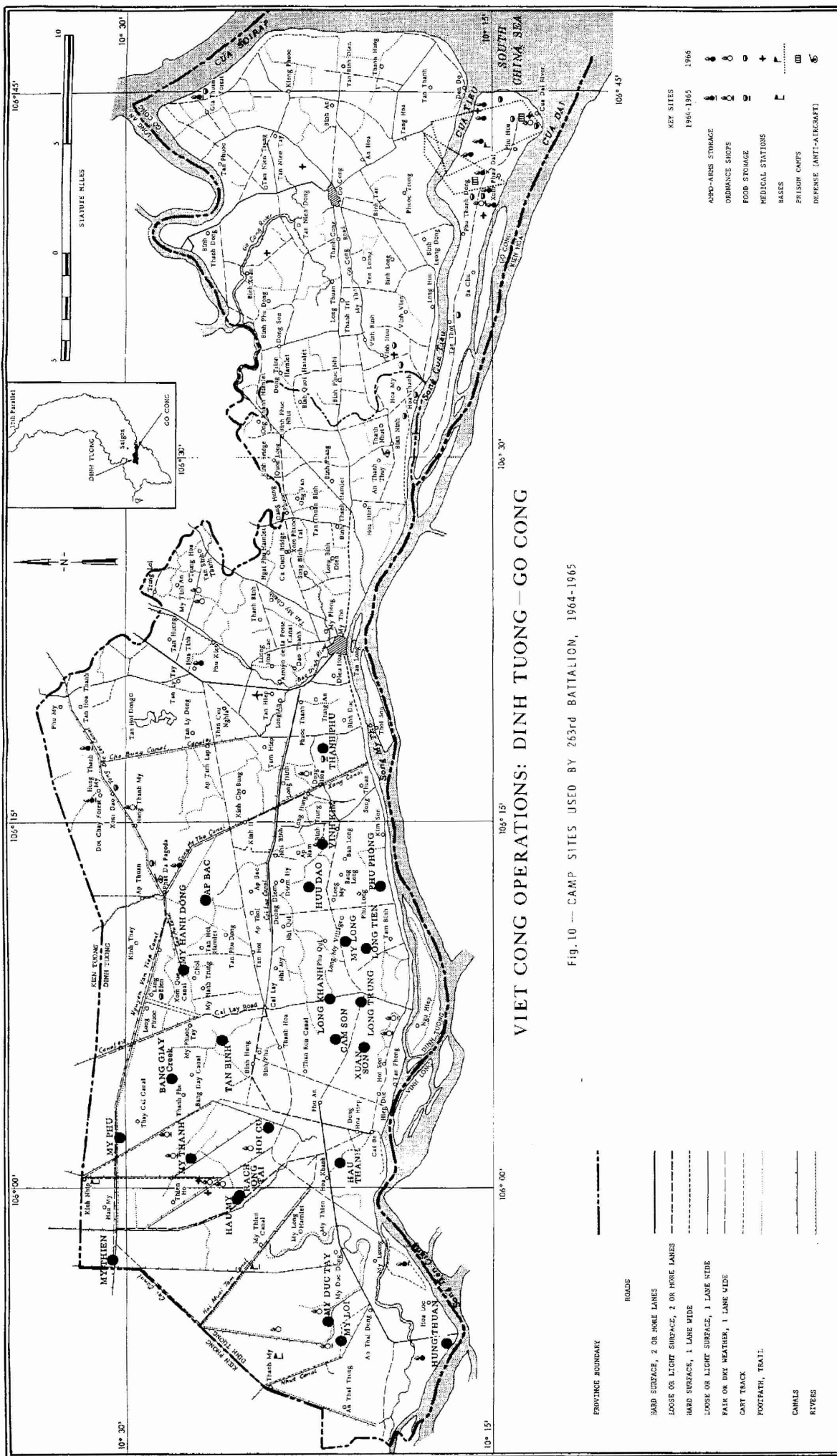


Fig. 7—Ap Bac Camp Site in relation to Diem Hy Village







Some of the camps in western Dinh Tuong were used by both the 514th and the two regional battalions. (In principle, nothing prevented the 514th from using all the western camps. Command decisions apparently limited most of the 514th's activities to central and eastern Dinh Tuong.)

For the 514th battalion a complex of camps was considered permanent: in and near the Plain of Reeds: Lang Bien, Xom Dao (hamlet), Kinh Tay. After an attack, the 514th might occupy the Lang Bien-Kinh Tay-Xom Dao complex for three-month periods.¹ In the western part of Dinh Tuong, My Duc Tay (WS995457), and in the east, Binh Ninh and Hoa My hamlets served as permanent camps.

Although there are only sketchy data on specific itineraries for the 514th, some data are available on its camp network. Figure 11 shows the network of camp sites for the 514th as of 1965. Associated with each arc of the network is the battalion's march time. Ratings of the camp sites according to the three criteria listed above are also marked.²

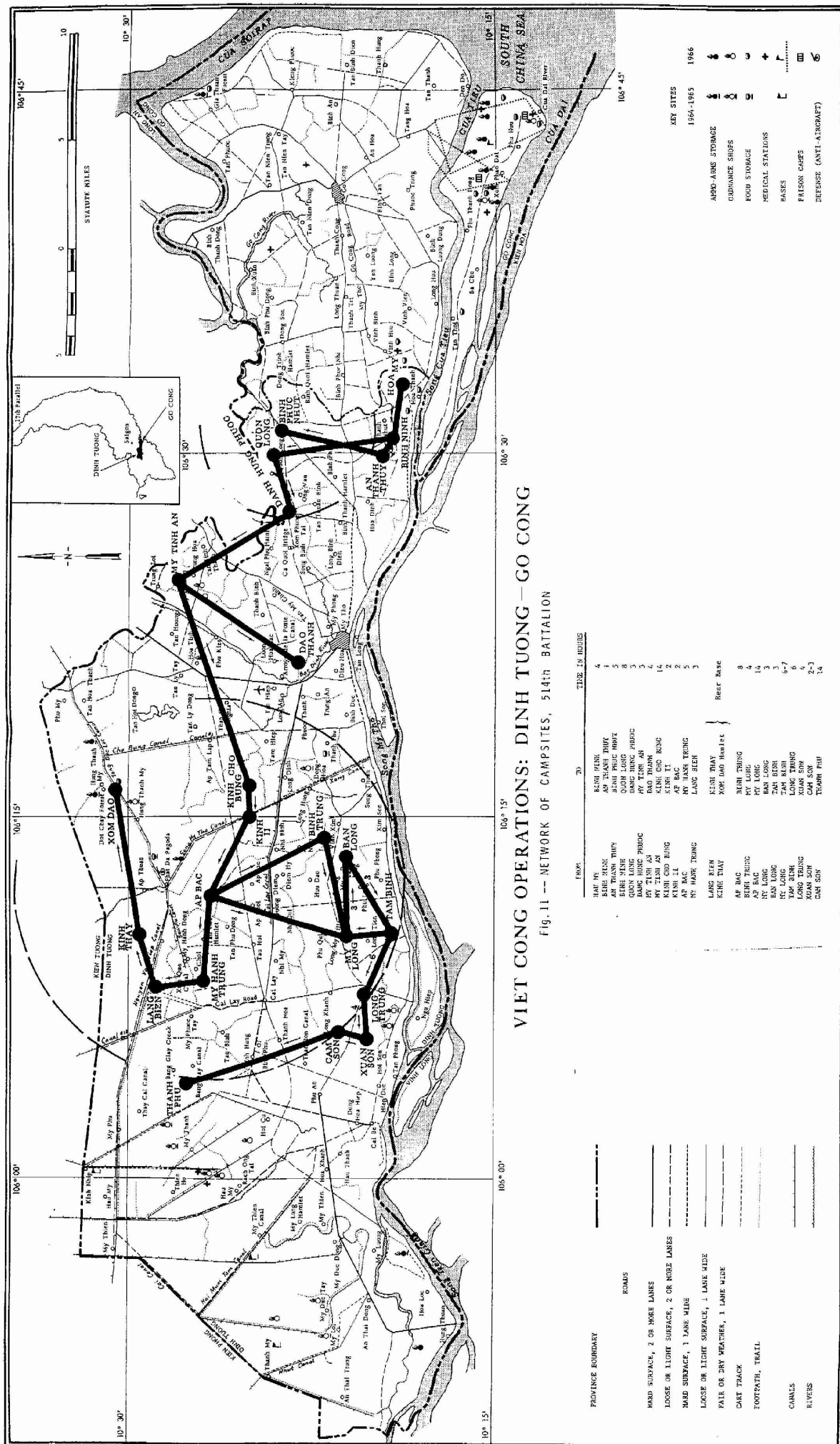
Figure 11 shows there is no particular correspondence between distance and march time. The least time path between camps does not correspond to the least distance path. Because of GVN positions and activities, routes between camp areas were often prescribed, especially road and canal crossing points.

The 514th battalion has its own route to follow when it has to move, and especially some fixed crossing points on Highway 4. For instance, whenever this battalion has to go through Binh Phu or Binh An village. On the stretch of road between Cai Lay and Long Dinh districts, it has to go through Nhi Qui Village. So far it has always stayed inside Nhi Qui until it came to the highway and crossed.³

¹DT-110. According to this source My Hanh Trung was once part of of this complex, but the 514th no longer stays there, since the population has left.

²See DT-110.

³DT-110.



Road crossing points were often chosen so the unit could receive guidance from local guerrillas. For example, on the move from My Tinh An to Kinh Cho Bung, Tan Huong was the crossing point on Highway 4, since village youth provided help and warning of GVN presence.

Time consuming detours were made in the vicinity of GVN posts that were relatively invulnerable to attack. For example, in moving from Hoa My to Bin Ninh:

It took my unit about 4 hours. If we set out at 5:00 PM, we will arrive at Binh Ninh campsite at 9:00 PM. The route is not long but we need four hours because we have to make a detour to avoid passing by the Thanh Nhut military post. This GVN post is manned by one platoon of Civil Guards and one platoon of Popular Force soldiers.¹

Table 4 shows the camps it is possible to reach in a night's march from any given place, along with the actual march times as given in DT-110.² Entries in the column at the far right give the total number of options open to the 514th battalion from any given location. (Entries in the row at the bottom of the table show all the locations from which a given location is reachable in a night.) Of the twenty locations on which we have definite march times, there are, for example, one with seven options, five with six options, five with five options, four with four options.

Given only a location, an assistant platoon leader of the 514th states that he could guess two or three likely bases for the next camp sites.

For instance, if while being stationed in Binh Ninh, we got shelled during the day, I could guess that we were moving to one of these three villages: Quan Long, Thanh Binh, or My Tinh An. To know for sure which of them would

¹DT-110.

²The march times according to our source are adapted to security requirements, GVN positions, road and canal crossings, etc. Options open at any time may be smaller than indicated because of GVN movements. On the other hand, there are many camp sites that can substitute for camps in the network. For example, Long Tien can substitute for Tam Binh.

Table 4

CAMP NETWORK FOR 514TH BATTALION -- 1965
(march time in hours)

From	To	Hoa My	Binh Ninh	An Thanh Thuy	Binh Phuoc Nhut	Quon Long	Dang Huong Phuoc	My Tinh An	Dao Thanh	Kinh Cho Bung	Kinh II	Ap Bac	Lang Bien	Binh Trung	My Long	Ban Long	Tam Binh	Lang Trung	Xuan Son	Cam Son	Thanh Phu	Numbers of camp options from a given camp
Hoa My		4	5	10	12																	4
Binh Ninh		4	1	6	8	11	14?															6
An Thanh Thuy		5	1	5	9	12																5
Binh Phuoc Nhut		10	6	5	2	5	8	12														7
Quon Long		12	8	9	2	3	6	10														7
Dang Huong Phuoc			11	12	5	3	3	7														6
My Tinh An			14?		8	6	3	4	14													6
Dao Thanh					12	10	7	4														4
Kinh Cho Bung								14														5
Kinh II										2		4	12	12								5
Ap Bac										2		2	10	10	14							5
Lang Bien										4	2		8	8	12-14							5
Binh Trung										12	10	8			4-5	7	10					3
My Long										12	10	8			4-5	3	6-7	12				6
Ban Long										14	12-14				7	3	3	9	13			6
Tam Binh															10	6-7	3	6	10	12-13		5
Lang Trung															12	9	6		4	6-7		5
Xuan Son															13	10	4		2-3			4
Cam Son																	12-13	6-7	2-3	14		4
Thanh Phu																				14		1
Number of camps from which a given camp is reachable in a night's march		4	6	5	7	7	6	6	4	4 or 5	5	5	3	5 or 6	6	5	6	5	4	4		1

Note: These figures are stated in or derived from data in DT-110. Where 14? appears, the source stated that the distance was a whole night's march, which he had earlier stated as being 14 hours in referring to the time between Binh Ninh and My Tinh An. However, when asked if the battalion could go from Kinh Cho Bung to Binh Trung he said it was "more than a night's march" and according to our calculations it was 12 hours.

be our next campsite I had to wait until we began to move. Then seeing the direction my unit takes, I would know where we were going.¹

But this platoon leader was discussing the least dense portion of the 514th's camp network (Fig. 11). In the denser parts of the network, the 514th retains more flexibility. The number of alternative camps is fairly large, and sometimes there are alternative paths. Furthermore, it is possible to bypass villages in the network. A platoon leader in the 261st battalion indicates that movement procedures can be much more flexible than is implied by the platoon leader from the 514th.

There was no fixed regulation for moving. Because it had to avoid strafings and shellings, the battalion lately has reconnoitered and used new roads. The short or long marches don't follow any fixed regulations either. Sometimes the battalion reaches a village at night and leaves it for another village at 4 AM....²

Nevertheless, the current camp network does constrain the 514th's area of operation. The problem is (1) to discover the camp network before it changes, and (2) to react to timely intelligence on specific locations. And this means that GVN and U.S. intelligence must be sensitive to residual signs of movement. Despite their best efforts, battalions do leave signs of their movement:

From my own experience I know that the battalion (261st) usually leaves behind traces of its passage. In the rainy season it is even easier to find these traces. The heavy weapons units in particular leave a train through the rice fields. In the dry season the grass is crushed and the battalion leaves a 2 meter wide path through the grass....The battalion often travels along trails. If you see the stubble along the sides of a trail you know that a unit has gone by. It should also be remembered that the movement regulations are strongly oriented toward avoiding artillery, for example, in the Plain of Reeds, a path that lies out of artillery range is always chosen.³

¹DT-110 (1965).

²DT-101 (1965).

³DT-101.

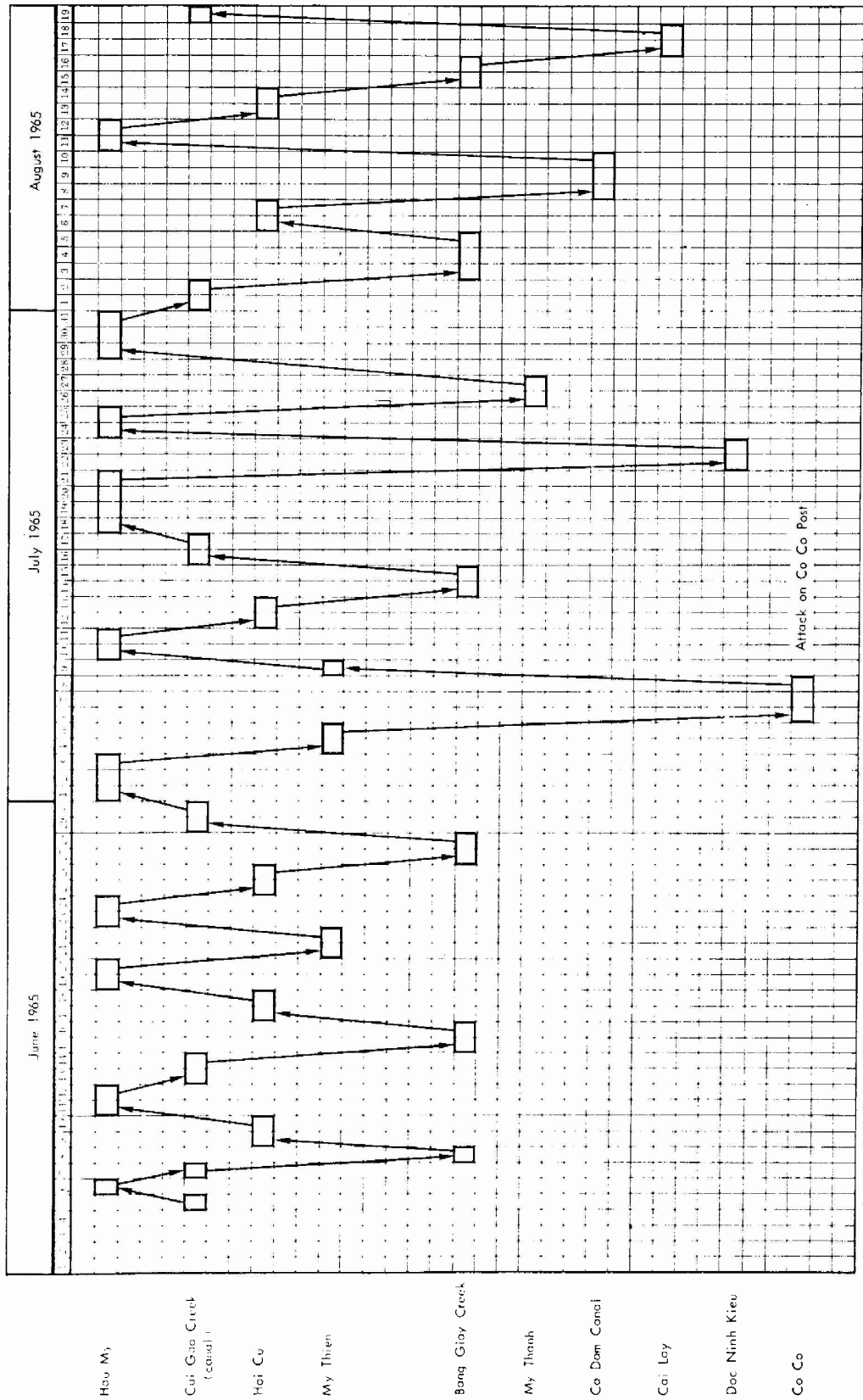
Figure 12 shows the itinerary of the 263rd battalion from June-October 1965 as given by a member of the battalion.¹ The figure shows that there are at least temporary regularities in movement. Repetition is especially evident during June when there were no offensive operations. Throughout the five-month period the 263rd battalion showed a persistent tendency to return to Hau My. The 263rd visited Hau My fourteen different times, but Hoi Cu only nine times. Figure 13 maps the places visited by the 263rd and shows the relatively small area in which the battalion was moving.

Figure 14 shows an itinerary for the 261st battalion for the period between 12 June and 20 July 1964. The 261st operated in the far western districts of Dinh Tuong, moving once into Kien Tuong. During this five week period, the battalion attacked once (Cai Be) and was attacked by GVN forces. The Long Tien, Cam Son and Hoi Cau camp sites were used in both June and July.

Figure 15 shows an itinerary for the 261st battalion from approximately 15 September to 15 October 1965. During this period the 261st followed a circular path for two weeks. After being attacked by the ARVN it moved north across Highway 4 to Ap Bac. From Ap Bac it then moved to Tan Hoi, My Thanh and Thien Ho. Two of the camp sites, Cam Son and Tan Hoi, used during this itinerary were also used in 1964. Figure 16 also contains a plot of the 261st's movement during this time.² Figure 11 showed that the 514th battalion

¹We made an attempt to check this itinerary against other sources available at RAND. We have been unable to corroborate the entire itinerary. Fragmentary data from other sources corroborate segments of it. See DT-52, 53, 100, 101, 118, AG-296, SF-43.

²Unfortunately data sufficient to construct a longer itinerary for the 261st are not at present available at RAND. We know, however, that approximately a year earlier the 261st spent two weeks in Long Dinh District, moving from Than Phu Village to Lang Bien Hamlet to Ap Bac (10-230-64). Another route used during 1963-64 was the Nguyen Van Tiep Canal. The battalion moved south to Dot Chai to Phu Long via Nhi Binh, Binh Trung, Ban Long then through Cai Mit to Cam Son. The intermittent movement pattern in Dinh Tuong Province may result from the stationing of the 261st primarily in Kien Hoa between 1963 and 1965 (DT-77).



Source: Log No. 1-0068-66, 07081-61

Fig. 12—Itinerary of the 263rd Battalion, June-October 1965

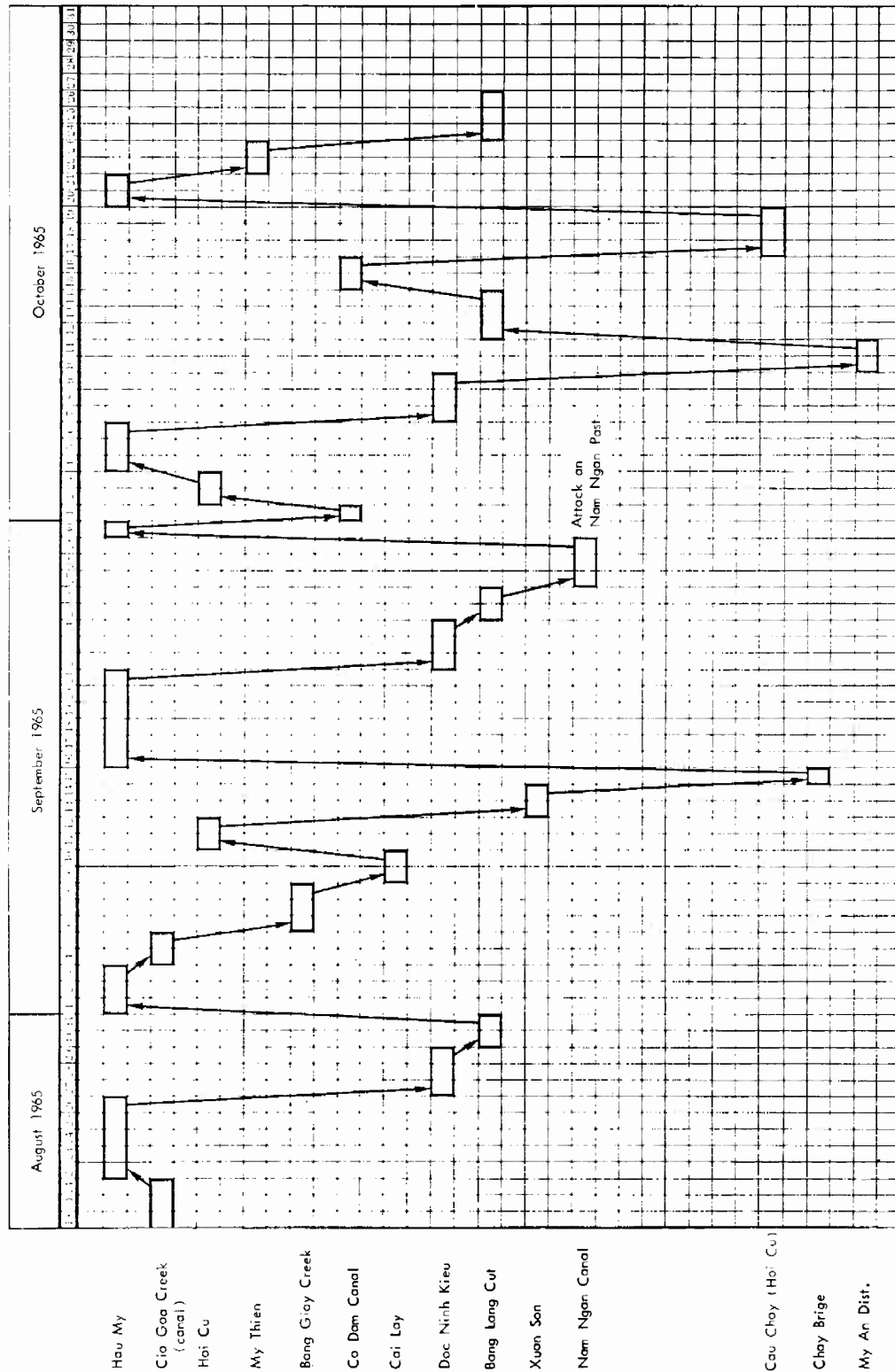
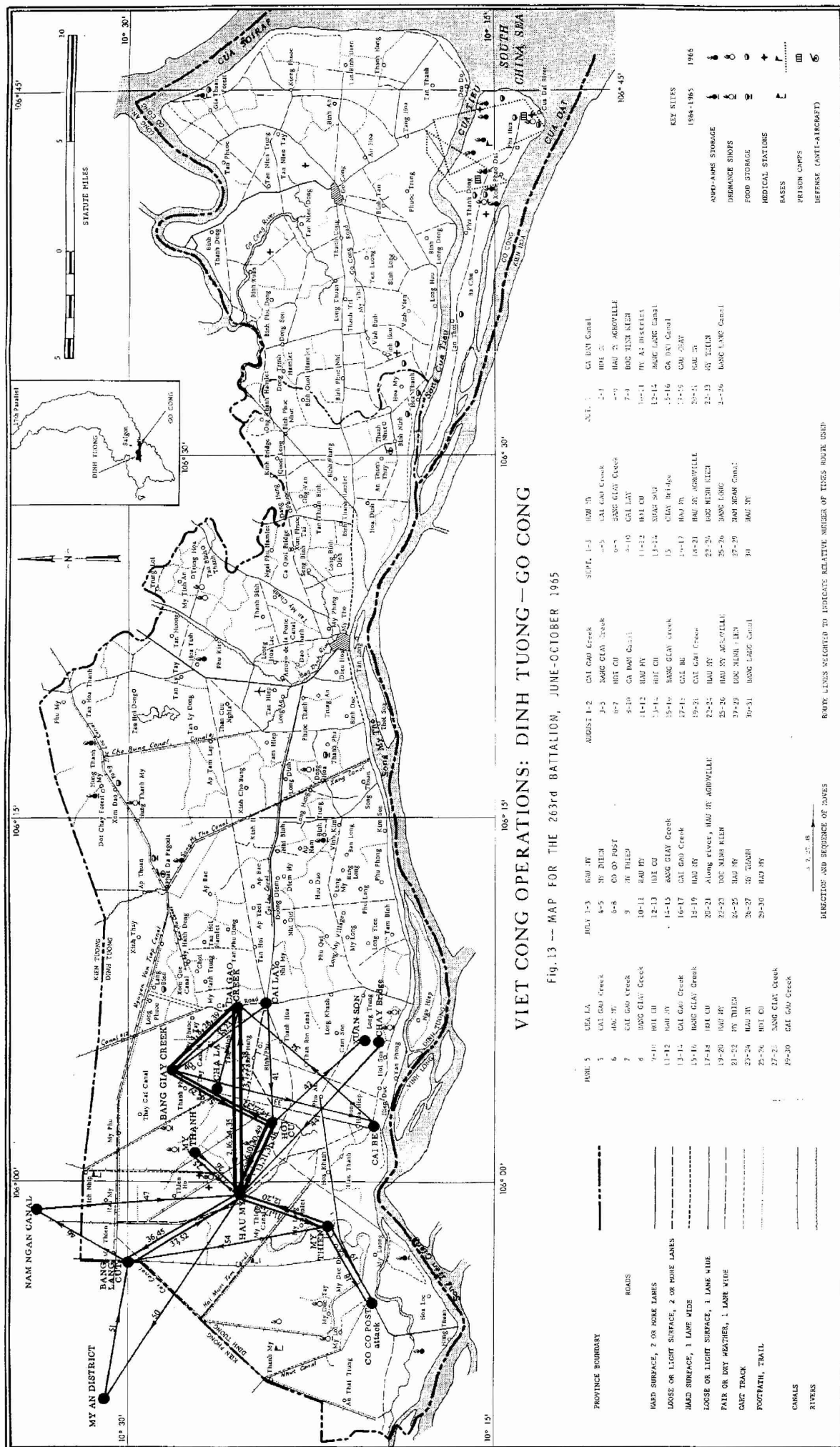


Fig. 12—(continued)



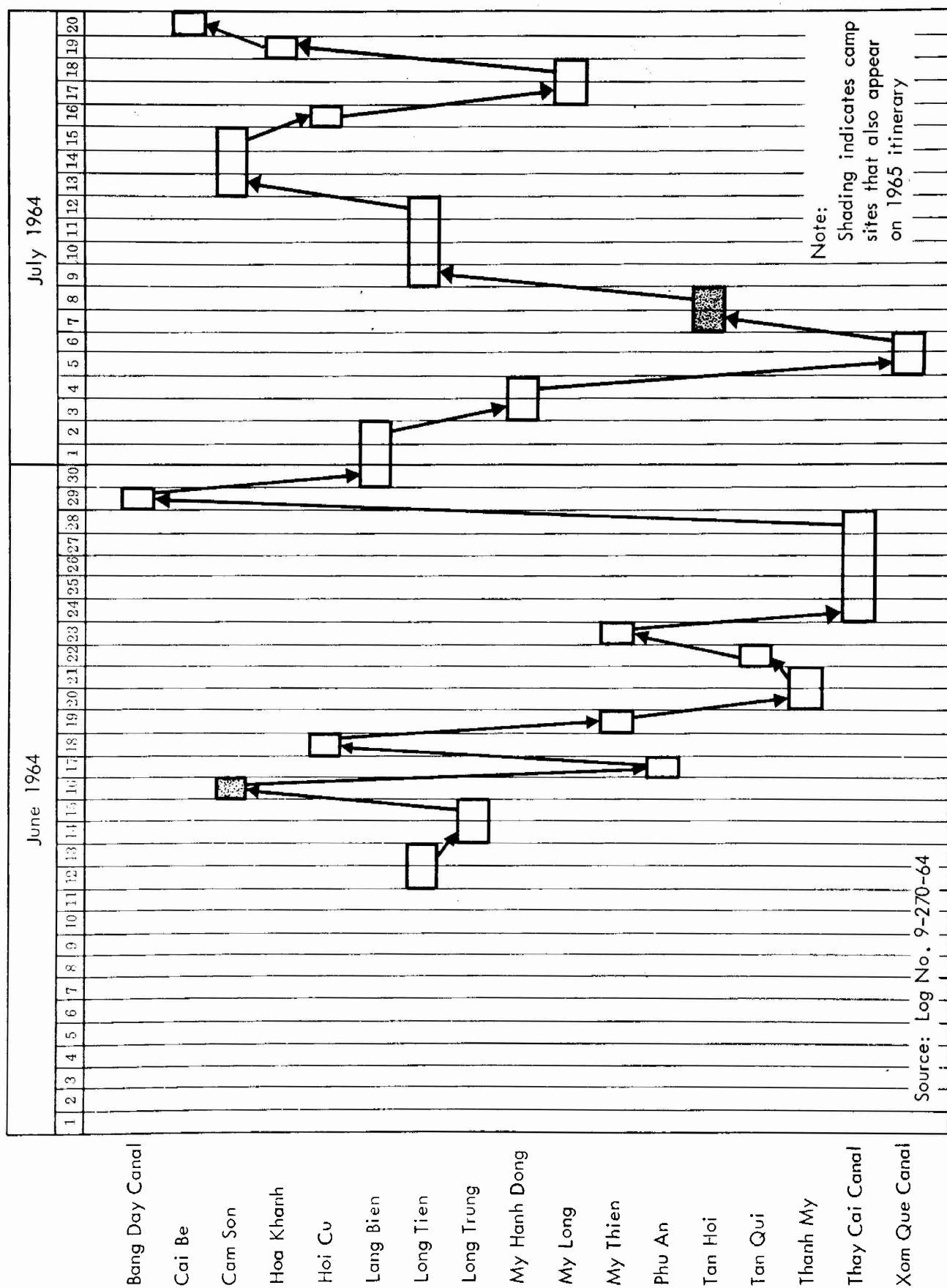


Fig. 14—Itinerary of 261st Battalion, June-July 1964

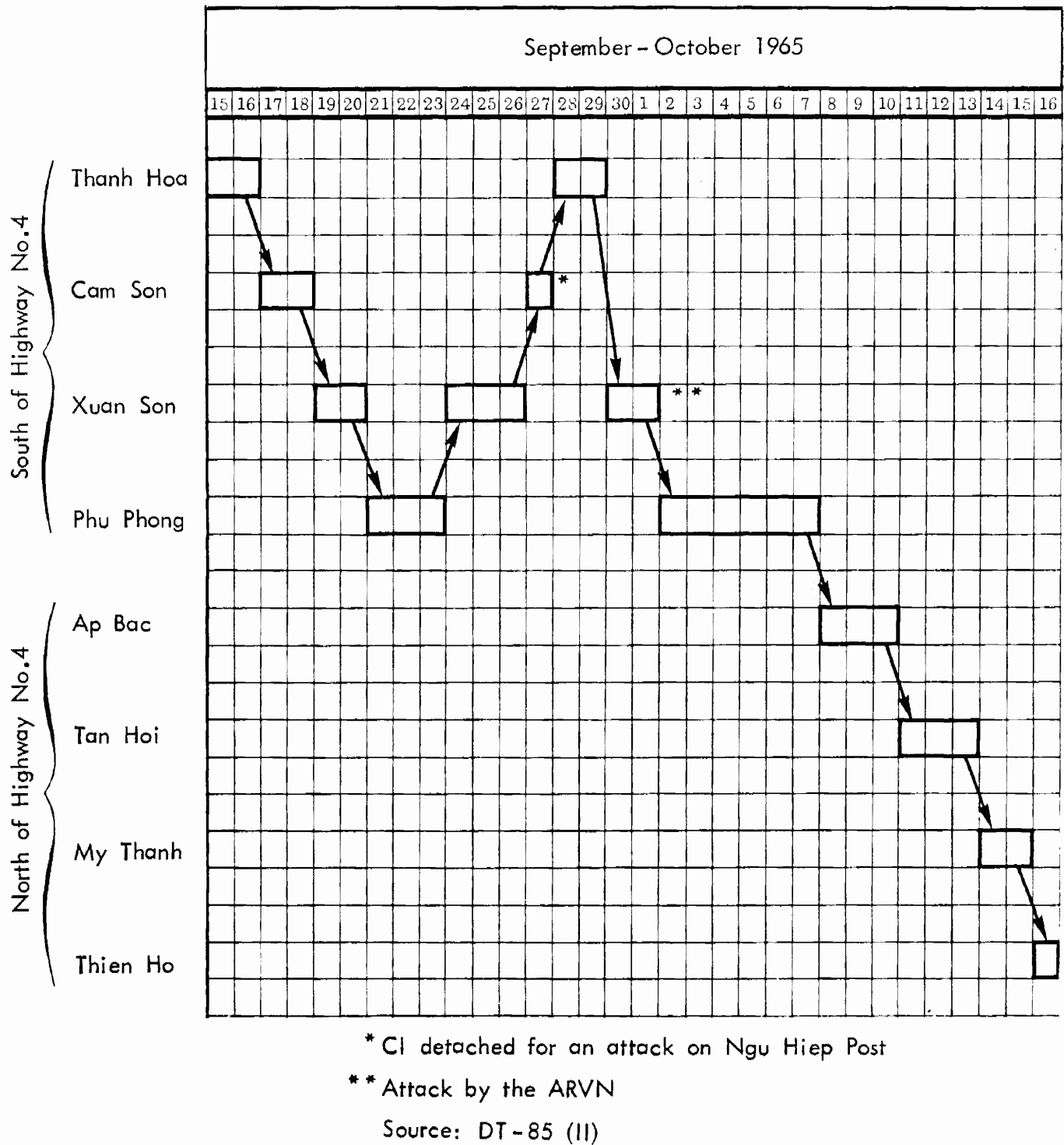


Fig.15— Itinerary of the 261st Battalion, September-October 1965

did not customarily use these places in 1964-65. But the 514th has been reported in My Thanh on other occasions, again illustrating the relatively large number of camp sites in the province.

Movement Procedures

One day before a move the battalion reconnaissance agents together with a representative from battalion headquarters and a cadre from each company reconnoiter the route and specific terrain.¹ At this time reconnaissance agents make contact with district or village cadre to arrange housing and provision.² Information available on two of the three battalions operating in Dinh Tuong, the 261st and 514th, indicates that their movement began after 1600 and could last until the next morning. Movement into hamlets, depending on travel distance, usually took place sometimes after midnight, but before daylight.

Units rarely stayed in a village over four days. During the course of a month, a single village might be used as a camp five times. One regulation for western Nam Bo holds that in contested areas units remain no longer than three days. In permanent base areas another regulation holds that units must remain no more than seven days.

Units within a battalion move in column formation. The reconnaissance-intelligence team moves at the head of the unit at a distance of 200-300 meters. Sometimes the reconnaissance-intelligence team is guided by the local commo-liaison man who remains about

¹In the case of the 514th battalion, destinations were previously determined by the Province Military Affairs Committee. The battalion would inform the committee immediately of any change in itinerary.

²Cadres from the food supply section of the battalion also are sent to the bivouac area in advance to arrange a food supply for the unit with the adjacent village party chapter. One procedure was to have the families of cadres in the attacking unit buy food at the local market.

400-500 meters ahead of the unit.¹ Company size units also use this procedure. A typical march formation is: reconnaissance-intelligence team, two companies, combat support company, one infantry company, rear guard platoon. Heavy weapons companies accompany the battalion headquarters, if they are attached to the battalion.

In enemy territory, individuals walk Indian file and are spaced five to ten meters apart. In liberated or friendly areas, this same spacing is retained for daytime movements. At night the distance between individuals is shortened to two or four meters. Platoons are 50 meters apart, whereas companies are 100 meters apart. Thus, the formation of the 514th battalion is approximately 4,000-7,500 meters long when moving.

Utmost care is taken to preserve secrecy and concealment. Typically, companies receive orders one or two hours before movement. Battalion commanders summon the company commanders to receive the order and the company commanders then inform their platoon leaders. Equipment and clothing are then prepared for movement. The current camp or bivouac area is cleared and civilian houses put in order. The unit attempts to remove all traces of the camp to avoid detection by enemy aircraft. However, foxholes, fortifications, and trenches are left as they are because they will be used again.

En route companies keep in touch by voice if distances are not too great. Otherwise liaison men are used.² In crossing open areas, troops camouflage themselves with vegetation typical of the area. If aircraft are in evidence, they sit down and remain motionless. When not in the open, troops conceal themselves from aircraft observation by using available cover and concealment. In the event movement by day is essential, troops are all well camouflaged and attempt to move through orchards and gardens. If aircraft approach, troops lie down hoping they cannot be distinguished from trees and hedges.

¹Spacing is of course highly variable according to terrain, weather, etc.

²See Section II.

Elaborate precautions are taken in road crossings. First the reconnaissance team goes ahead with an infantry platoon and two support squads. The reconnaissance team keeps watch on any local GVN forces and contacts local underground agents. The infantry platoon protects the reconnaissance team, and when the battalion crosses the road, this platoon secures the flanks. The support squads meanwhile deploy to fight against GVN armored cars, if any.¹ The 514th battalion tends to cross roads and canals at the same points. But alternatives do exist. Each time the 514th crosses a road it takes from two to three hours to do so, because of the required procedures.

When a unit arrives at a camp site liaison personnel assign squads to the houses of hamlet residents, usually a squad per house. The soldiers are allowed to contact members of squads of the same platoon but are not allowed to contact soldiers in other platoons without authorization of their platoon leader. Infantry companies are stationed on the border of the hamlet and the heavy weapons company stays in the middle of the hamlet. Fifty caliber machine guns are emplaced near the battalion headquarters and 57 mm recoilless rifles are placed with the infantry companies. Villagers are not allowed out of the village. Guerrillas or self-defense units assist the reconnaissance cells in maintaining the security of the battalion while it is stationed in the village.

Planning and Coordination in Bivouac

Whenever battalions camp, they make extensive preparations for a possible defensive action. Contingency battle plans are made before encounters:

¹DT-110.

When camping in the low lands we must be ready for combat and draft defense plans for possible enemy counter-operations and heliborne raids.

Communications are established; telephone wires are laid out. Contact is established with other military units and with the Province Military Affairs Committee. On some occasions the Military Affairs Committee may be located a few kilometers from the village in which a province battalion is camping. The Military Affairs Committee may then take operational command over all troops in the area.

Viet Cong doctrine stresses the need for close coordination between a unit under attack and all other units stationed within the district. When a battalion arrives in a campsite, it coordinates its plans for a defensive battle with other units, that is, regional, provincial, or militia units.

The militia will coordinate with the Main Force reconnaissance units. District companies, for example, may fight alongside the battalion. Small militia detachments may take advantage of the terrain to intercept the GVN forces when they are still far from the main battlefield. They attempt to demoralize the enemy and slow down his movements. They attempt to pin him down in a disadvantageous area before dark so that the Main Force and Local units will have ample time to find him and attack him or his bivouac.

FORTIFICATIONS

We have described in some detail the various measures used by Viet Cong units to deny information on their location. In the Delta, Viet Cong units have not been able to oppose daytime attacks by GVN units unless the battlefield provides terrain favorable to defensive operations. Thus battalions try to select locations for their daytime bivouacs that are potentially favorable for tactical defense and construct fortifications that reduce their vulnerability to artillery and aircraft bombardment.

Selection of Terrain

Camp sites are rated according to three criteria:¹

(1) The hamlets of the village and the area surrounding them must provide terrain favorable to defensive operations.

(2) The area surrounding the defended perimeter must provide little protection to attacking GVN troops.

(3) Finally, there must be no obstacles, such as rivers or highways, that impede a subsequent withdrawal.²

Battalions prefer sites that are located within a large area covered by dense foliage. The dimensions of the forested area considered suitable for defense are five kilometers by one-half kilometer. Trees have to be large; mangrove shrubs, for instance, do not provide enough cover.

Under the protective cover of the trees, two lines of fortification are constructed from 50 to 200 meters apart. The first line of fortifications is constructed along the edge of the forested area. The dense foliage helps to conceal the location of the fortifications and movement between the two lines.

Equal attention is paid to the terrain through which GVN forces must advance against the defended battalion positions. Hamlets surrounded by flat fields without obstacles are preferred as camp sites. The unobstructed terrain enables a unit to observe the approach of GVN forces and denies protection to the attacker. For example, units avoid villages surrounded by fields with high ricefield banks, graves, and trees because such obstacles can give protection to advancing GVN and now U.S. forces.

¹The discussion in this section is based on DT-110.

²These criteria are similar to those used by the United States. However, the United States uses five criteria to assess terrain: observation, fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, and routes of withdrawal. Fields of fire are built into the Viet Cong's preferred fortifications. See Fig. 17.

Mines, booby traps, and other such devices planted along likely avenues of approach and behind protective obstructions further complicate an advance. Militia may also build obstacles that will stop the advance of the M-113s. Wide drainage canals and large dikes that cannot be breached on impact will immobilize M-113s.¹

Defended Positions

A defended area in the form of the letter L is preferred because it makes crossfire possible.² There are two lines of fortification, consisting of individual trenches connected to bunkers. The individual trenches are 1.2 meters long, 1.2 meters deep and .4 meters wide.³ In front of the trench is an embankment of earth with an embrasure for firing. The bunker runs at a right angle to the trench. It is one meter long covered by an earthen roof 40 centimeters thick, reinforced by trunks of banana trees. (See Fig. 17.)

As matters stand, the Front soldiers can shoot at the advancing column of attackers and force them to withdraw and when the enemy withdraws to shell the defenders, the latter can take refuge in the covered portion of the trench and therefore remain unharmed. If the enemy stops shelling to launch a new assault, the Front's soldiers once again move to the embrasure of the trench to fight.⁴

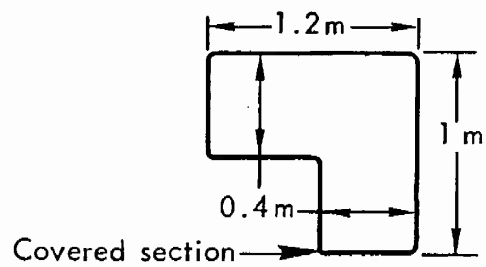
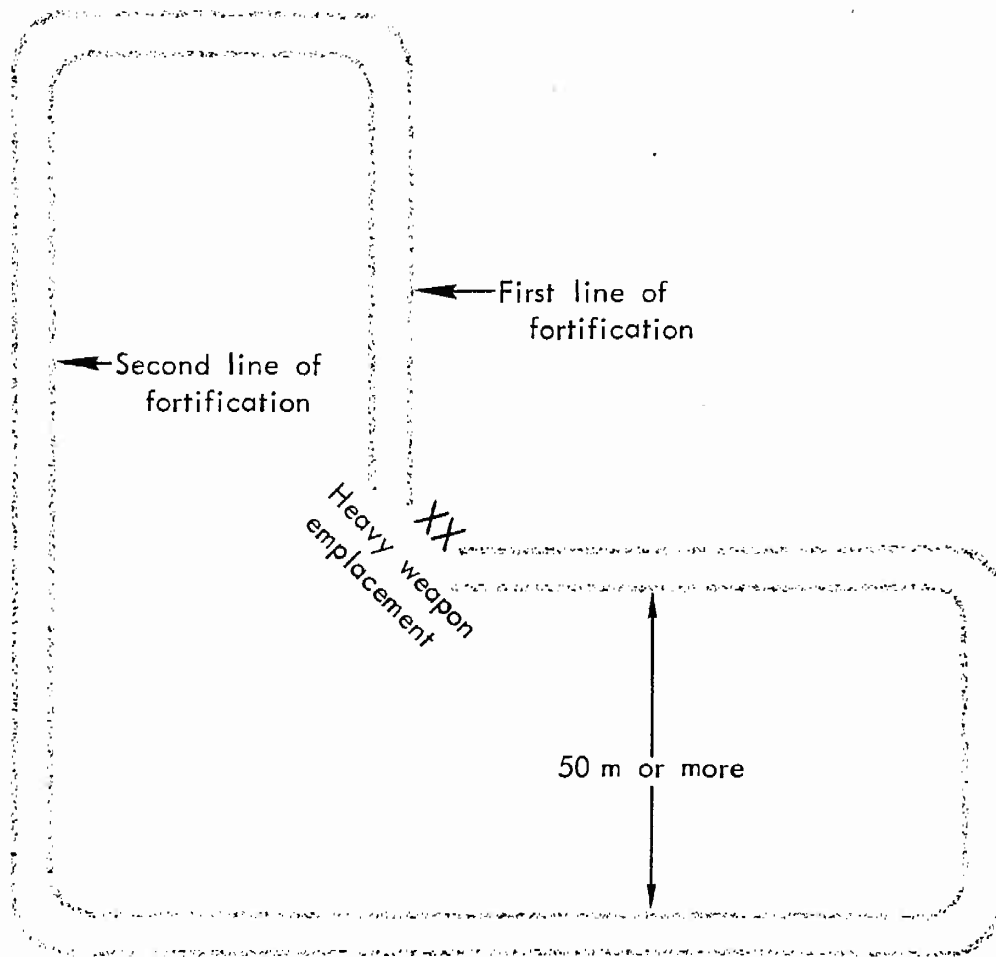
If a battalion enters a previously unfortified village and intends to stay there for at least one day, their first task is the construction of trenches and bunkers. This takes from one to two hours. However, in frequently visited villages, fortifications are preserved for future use, and troops need only repair existing structures.

¹Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam, Headquarters, U.S. Army Section, Lessons Learned No. 26: M-113 Operations.

²If terrain permits, the L will be transformed into a U allowing fire from three directions.

³DT-110.

⁴DT-110.



INDIVIDUAL TRENCH

Fig.17—L - shaped fortification

The separation between the two lines of fortifications depends on the width of the defended area and on the vegetation and terrain. If the defended area is very narrow, units may be forced to build the two lines only 50 meters apart. On the other hand, if width is not a constraint, the separation between the two lines will be large enough to prevent any GVN soldiers who may have captured the first line from seeing the second line. When high grass and bushes are absent in the forested area, the second line is to be constructed relatively far from the first. However, if heavy underbrush conceals the locations of the second line, the separation between the lines can be small.

The second line of fortifications serves several purposes. If soldiers are driven out of the first line, they can withdraw to the second line and once again take advantage of the prepared fortifications. There are no mines or booby traps between the two lines so that soldiers can move freely. After a withdrawal from the first line, troops will eventually counterattack and try to retake the first line of fortifications.

The second line of trenches has great utility. If the Front soldiers are driven out of the first line of trenches they can withdraw to the second line and once again take advantage of prepared fortifications to continue to fight. Since the GVN soldiers do not have any fortifications to their advantage they would be easily pushed back after their first effort, and immediately after the withdrawal of the enemy, the Front soldiers would be ordered to come back to the first line of trenches. That was the case in the 1965 Ap Bac battle, and we call this tactic of countering sweep-operations the "rubber band tactic." This tactic helps the platoon leaders to keep control and command the fighters during the battle, and prevents the Front soldiers from being disbanded by the first successful assault from the ARVN. It also helps us to resist until darkness comes and, at that time, we can withdraw from the battlefield in safety. Experience has also proved that, thanks to it, we have usually resisted successfully and have inflicted heavy casualties upon the ARVN so far.¹

¹DT-110.

Hardness, Dispersal, and Concealment

If artillery and aircraft bombard the Viet Cong positions, the soldiers take cover in their individual bunkers. When the bombardment lifts and the infantry advance toward the defended area, the troops return to their trenches and resume firing through the embrasures.

Where the troops seek shelter during an attack depends in part on the pattern of bombardment. Troops are not necessarily stationed in the first line of fortifications. During a preliminary bombardment, they may be stationed in either the first or second line of fortifications. They may also be in air-raid shelters located in or on the perimeter of the hamlets. (Air-raid shelters are often constructed inside peasant houses and along the roads connecting the hamlets.)

Viet Cong units are flexible in their patterns of response. For example, if a unit observes in several engagements that GVN forces are bombarding the periphery of the defended area, the Viet Cong soldiers will be instructed to use the trenches of the second line of fortifications or the air-raid shelters of the hamlets. During a bombardment, prior to a sweep operation, the commander of a Viet Cong battalion stationed in a village reacted as follows:

...The main objective of enemy bombardments and shellings was the fortification line outside the village. When the enemy shelled and bombarded for a second time, the battalion conjectured that the enemy might land troops to conduct a sweep operation. It ordered detachments deployed at fortification lines outside the village to withdraw to the edge of the village to avoid enemy preparatory fire or troops landing right on the line.

In addition to flexible response to bombardment the Viet Cong tries to deny the GVN information on the precise location of the fortifications; thus the GVN is forced to area bombardment. The

dense foliage covering the area within which fortifications are constructed makes aerial reconnaissance difficult:

Next to Hoa My is Binh Ninh campsite. This campsite is regarded as a very good one. The site is large and is covered with dense foliage too. The width of the campsite gives us a special advantage; it confuses the GVN artillery about where to shell.¹

The precise locations of these fortifications are also kept secret even from the inhabitants of the hamlet near which they were constructed. Some of the fortifications that are not well covered by the trees are camouflaged. Recently, the Viet Cong instructed its units to set up dummy targets that would draw GVN fire away from the real fortifications.

Recently, enemy artillery shelling and strikes have been relentlessly conducted against our routes, combat fortifications, sites of repeated attacks by friendly forces, frequently used assembly areas such as road junctions and intersections,...uncamouflaged trenches, etc.

To prevent the enemy from bombarding the villages, we must use deception by setting up dummy troop locations in little frequented areas, far away from roads and hamlets. These dummy positions must be camouflaged but not thoroughly enough to make it impossible for the enemy to see them. A dummy anti-aircraft position will be set up 200 or 300 meters away in order to attract the enemy fire and avoid his destruction of villages and hamlets.

Earlier doctrine on attacking these fortified positions emphasized the principle of "fire and maneuver." The defending force was to be pinned down in its fortifications, thus reducing the volume of firepower that could be delivered against the attacking force. Attacking troops were to take advantage of the reduced firepower of the defense and advance during the bombardment.²

¹DT-110.

²See Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam, Headquarters, U.S. Army Section, Lessons Learned No. 36: Fire and Maneuver, February 1964.

More recent experience indicates that casualties will be extremely heavy in an advance against Viet Cong fortified positions. A U.S. battalion commander states:

I have talked to small unit commanders all over Vietnam since the first of the year, who have slugged it out with a fanatical enemy in these positions. From these detailed after-combat interviews, I have concluded that it is impossible to penetrate, flank, or envelop these fortifications without taking extremely heavy casualties. To fight the enemy in these positions is analogous to cornering a tiger in his lair and then trying to stalk him with only a bowie knife. The smart hunter will trap the tiger and then stand back and blow his brains out with a weatherbee Magnum.¹

The preferred tactic is to locate the fortifications, surround them to prevent escape, and then lay on artillery fire and tactical air.

The only way to successfully deal with a determined enemy fighting out of fortified positions is not to engage him with your main body. A scout element moving by stealth must precede the main body by several hundred meters. This element will find the enemy's positions either by observation or by drawing fire. If the positions are unoccupied, then only after a careful reconnaissance should the main body advance. On more than one occasion the enemy has slipped back into their fortifications to trap a unit that was searching their seemingly "abandoned" positions.

If the scout element draws fire or observes that the positions are occupied, they will alert the main body and attempt to determine the extent of the positions. Artillery fire is immediately placed on the positions, TAC Air is requested and scouts return to the main body's position. The main body establishes a good defensive perimeter and directs the FAC to the target. After the fighter aircraft are ready to fire the "Magnum," the artillery fire is shifted to trails leading out of the enemy's position. The artillery fire can be precisely adjusted on these trails by the FAC or an airborne forward observer. The next higher commander will position ambush forces deep to the enemy's rear along his likely routes of withdrawal. Only after the enemy positions are smashed to bits should the scouts move out again to "count bodies and collect weapons."²

¹ Lt. Col. David H. Hackworth, "Find 'Em, Fix 'Em and Then Smash 'Em," in Lessons Learned, Department of the Army, Headquarters, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate), January 28, 1967.

² Ibid. FAC is Forward Air Controller.

Withdrawal and Breaking Contact

Battalions attacked in their camp sites during the daytime fight a defensive battle until nightfall and then withdraw under the cover of darkness.¹ Source materials do not go into much detail on retreat.² They usually say simply that the battalion withdrew at night. Battalions have not encountered any difficulty in withdrawal. This may be a consequence of skillful withdrawal tactics practiced by the battalions as well as a consequence of some limitations of GVN forces committed to battle on short notice. First of all, terrain permitting suitable routes of withdrawal is one of the criteria that determine whether a hamlet will be used as a bivouac by troops. For example, the Dao Thanh camp site in Dinh Tuong is considered good from the standpoint of defensive battles but not good for retreat. Because a river flows behind the camp and Highway 4 lies near it, the unit could be surrounded if it stayed in the village. Consequently, battalions try to avoid staying in this camp site.

The battalion has at its disposal militia units which have a thorough knowledge of the terrain. Very detailed maps are drawn showing every possible path that can be used by the battalion.

Sometimes communication trenches or even tunnels may be constructed leading from the defended camp to an area that provides good concealment.

Also the Viet Cong unit may know the disposition of GVN troops at night. Reconnaissance men are instructed to stay close to the GVN troops. Thus they are able to report the possible routes of escape through the GVN lines. The battalion may then disperse into smaller units, infiltrate through the GVN lines, and reassemble at some rally point or assembly area.

¹However, withdrawal does not necessarily take place during the first night following the initial attack.

²But the battalion does have a predetermined assembly point.

The secret withdrawing action requires an investigation by the reconnaissance men. They should have a firm knowledge about the open slots through which we can move out and also about the point of assembly. At this time, a deceiving combat element should be left behind and should be the last to move out. In this connection, it is necessary to make a calculation on the route: rivers, canals, and times. We will usually withdraw during the night after an element has encountered the enemy during the day.

During the withdrawal, one unit of the battalion or the local guerrillas may take over the positions vacated by the battalion and deceive the GVN units into thinking that the battalion is still in place.

Perhaps the inability of the GVN to prevent such withdrawals is in part a consequence of their unwillingness to operate at night and in part a consequence of their having insufficient manpower during such operations. Lack of training in nighttime operations and fear of an ambush may restrict the willingness of GVN commanders to prevent the retreat of units.

There are probably quite high force requirements for the formation around occupied hamlets of a front line sufficiently dense to prevent infiltration and a sudden breakthrough of the besieged force. Bernard Fall, in an analysis of the failure of a French attempt to surround a large Viet Minh unit, concluded that the operation "...had once more proved that it was impossible to seal off a pocket in an airtight fashion as long as a battalion had to hold more than 1500 yards of ground -- and most of the battalions along the southern flank of the pocket had held more than 3000 yards."¹

In addition to the battalions holding the line, there have to be some reserve units behind the line. If the hamlets of a village occupied by the battalion stretch over a distance of 5 km, the attacking forces have to be deployed over a perimeter of approximately

¹Street Without Joy, Pall Mall Press, London, 4th Edition, Second Printing, 1965, p. 171.

13 km. There should be nearly five attacking battalions if each battalion holds 3,000 yards (2,743 meters) and more than nine battalions of each battalion holds 1,500 yards (1,372 meters). If an encounter during daytime between the battalions and GVN units is the result of a quick response by GVN units trying to exploit intelligence on the location of a unit, it may not be possible to concentrate ten GVN battalions around the village by nightfall of the first day of battle. In one battle a Viet Cong analysis relates:

The [GVN] force participating in a raid is usually not very large in order to ensure its mobility and preserve secrecy. It consists of one or two battalions only, heliborne to the battlefield to attack one of our companies. The operation lasts two or three hours.¹

In a 1965 GVN operation in Long An province, GVN troops were assembled at 900 hours for a sudden attack at 1330 on a village occupied by a battalion. By the end of the day only two GVN battalions were operating against the village. At night the GVN forces apparently did not even try to form a line around the villages but instead camped in close formation. The Viet Cong battalion left at night without any difficulties.

In sweep operations, large GVN forces may be available. However, large operations require much preparation, and some of the GVN activities preliminary to such operations can quite easily provide the battalion with warning. For example, one document lists GVN activities that are indications of a sweep operation:

Signs Noted Before Sweeps:

- a. Making use of informers to collect information, spies to conduct investigations, and Special Forces personnel to arrest people and to seize documents.
- b. The conduct of air reconnaissance, placement of diversionary troops, and spreading false news.
- c. Conferences between the command echelons and local authorities to formulate plans.

d. The concentration of troops for the transport of provisions.

e. Restriction of the soldiers' movements, blockage of roads in preparation for the operation. Harassment by aircraft in those areas bordering the location where the sweep will be conducted.

We may conjecture, then, that the GVN forces are faced with a dilemma. If they try to surprise a unit, they will be limited in the number of troops that can be brought into battle on the first day and the subsequent night. Small GVN forces are unable either to storm and take the defended camp site or to prevent the withdrawal of the battalion during the night. On the other hand, commitment of large numbers of GVN troops requires preparation, which can give the Viet Cong unit several days' warning.¹

Battlefield Mobility

During defensive operations in a hamlet or set of hamlets, a battalion may be spread out over a potential battlefield 5 kilometers long. The opposing GVN forces are mobile because they can be transported on short notice from one area of the battlefield to another and thus can concentrate superior forces against any one subordinate unit of a Viet Cong battalion. The Viet Cong are aware of this.

Consequently, only highly mobile troops and firepower in counteroperation defense can ensure timely reinforcement to units that are in danger. They can also aid units that are being annihilated by enemy aircraft and artillery and, when necessary, can concentrate forces to conduct mobile attacks, ambushes, or raids against an enemy element.

Preparations for battlefield mobility are made before the battle begins. Because the GVN has air superiority, movement routes must be concealed from air observations. Roads may be lined with air-raid shelters for protection against strafing and bombing.

¹For further discussion of withdrawal, see Viet Cong Withdrawal Tactics.

The counter sweep operation site was within our base. As it has long been liberated, the people's movement was high and combat villages had been established (specifically, fencing in the village, digging air-raid shelters along the village roads, along creeks and in the people's houses, and digging trenches against M.113 APC's). The village guerrilla force was relatively strong and the people were experienced in countering sweep-operation and avoiding enemy aircraft and artillery.

Counterattacks During Defensive Operations

Several additional aspects of defensive operations are stressed in Viet Cong documents analyzing the conduct of battles. First of all, during defense operations a battalion must not remain passive but should undertake counterattacks whenever an opportune moment arrives:

However, we still had many deficiencies. Our combat plan provided for passive defense and counter-operations and did not provide a plan of attack. Many occasions had not been seized to annihilate the enemy because aggressiveness in counter operation had not been thoroughly understood by the troops.²

During sweep operations the Viet Cong claim that GVN forces are vulnerable to nighttime attack, because they camp in close formation in open fields and do not construct careful fortifications.

Usually enemy sweep operations last a few days with several elements moving toward the pre-determined concentration point. Consequently, the enemy usually has to bivouac on open fields at night. The distance between various units varies with the size of the unit. Their fortifications are very simple. The enemy usually takes advantage of natural terrain and encamps in a close formation because soldiers must be ready to help one another. (Defense is set up at inner perimeter with a command post and heavy weapons in the center.) The enemy morale, fear of being attacked and the poor organization of his artillery support are objective factors very favorable for our raid.¹

¹The Viet Cong have been known to take U.S. bivouacs at night as well as ARVN bivouacs.

Consequently, if a Viet Cong battalion decides not to withdraw from a village at night, it is instructed to make preparations for a nighttime attack on the camp of GVN forces.¹

Enemy weaknesses can be often found within their cantonments. During the day, the enemy circulates in disorder without regard to any formation. At night their troops gather in sections. However, their firepower becomes restricted and their artillery and mechanized equipment lose their effectiveness. Therefore, we should get information on the enemy situation and organize a raid on their bivouacs, especially their command post and artillery or mechanized equipment section, in order to acquire easy gains.

A raid on the enemy bivouac should be organized with light units, which can make a secret approach in a short period of time and then suddenly open fire. A deep thrust is made into the center to separate the enemy troops for annihilation.

During the counter sweep a raid does not require careful preparation. It is necessary to act quickly in a short time, and to organize strong raiding arrows which must have a factor of bravery in fighting, and can assault hastily and fiercely. We would lose excellent opportunities to destroy the enemy if we desired to be well prepared and well equipped before launching a raid on an enemy bivouac. We need to develop the techniques of raiding during the enemy operation, in order to disrupt the enemy's superiority on the military field.

¹This was the case in the counter sweep operation conducted by the 510th Long An Province Battalion, 1 April 1965.

VI. OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

The same close attention to detail that characterizes defensive activities is paid to offensive activities. Activities are broken into well-defined phases. With each phase tasks are broken into small components and cadres and soldiers carefully rehearse required actions.

Unless all tasks are completed and all criteria are satisfied, a unit will not receive a "go" signal. This section describes tasks, procedures, and criteria involved in attacks on posts, ambushes, and attacks by maneuvering forces before and after the "go" signal.¹

ATTACKS ON POSTS²

Initial Proposal

If province military forces are used in an attack on a post, the initial proposal for the assault is examined by a member of the Province Military Affairs Committee. The plan is then submitted to the head of the Military Affairs Committee. He then studies it, paying special attention to the political effects, and the relative capabilities of Viet Cong and GVN forces. If he approves of the proposed operation, he presents it to the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee. The Secretary studies the plan in turn and if he thinks it sound he calls a meeting of the whole Province Committee to study, discuss, and perhaps approve the plan.

Once the proposal is approved by the Province Committee, the Military Affairs Committee divides the preliminary tasks among its three staffs. The Military Staff sends a reconnaissance unit to study the objective from a military point of view, and to prepare a sand table mock-up. The Political Staff sends a cadre to contact the civilians in the area, to learn their reaction to the proposed attack. It also studies the morale of the troops to see if they are mentally

¹Discussion of logistics is deferred to Section VII.

²Many of the procedures for attacks on posts are the same as those for attacks on hamlets and towns.

and emotionally prepared. If they are not, the Political Staff must take the necessary measures to prepare them. The Rear Services Staff determines whether civilians can furnish the necessary food and labor, including that needed for removal of the dead and of booty.¹

Reconnaissance

Information is gathered on the terrain, troop strength, weapons, the modus operandi of the local GVN commander, and so on. This reconnaissance is conducted on the outside of the post and in some cases on the inside.

For example, before the 514th's attack on Tan Thuan Binh post on 8 June 1964, two investigations were made. In early May 1964, the battalion commanding staff and some of the 514th reconnaissance agents, in coordination with the Cai Lay District [Party] Executive Committee investigated the terrain of the post. Then in late May the battalion commander and a battalion reconnaissance team reconnoitered the terrain again and made a chart of the post. The chart showed fortified works, walls, moats, barbed wire fences, and mine fields.

The leader of a reconnaissance squad of the 261st battalion describes the reconnaissance procedures:

When we got orders from the battalion's command to obtain information on a certain GVN post, we sent out half of our recon platoon. This small detachment was always accompanied by two officers from the battalion's staff. Usually we arrived at the neighboring hamlets of the post late in the afternoon and we at once set about finding the local guerrillas and cadres to ask them everything they knew about the strength, armament and defense works of the post. We always took care to try to know what inhabitants maintained close relations with the troops in the post so we could arrest them just before the attack.

At night, our detachment broke into three groups to converge on the post from three different sides in order to check the accuracy of information thus far obtained on

¹Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff-J2, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Viet Cong Infrastructure (revised), pp. 25-26.

the terrain features and the post defense system. Sometimes when information on the post armament turned out to be inadequate, someone had to get inside the post itself. It was only after obtaining all possible data that the staff officers accompanying us worked out a sketch plan of the post with details on the defense system, heavy weapon emplacements (mortars, machine guns) and the post's environment.¹

Some idea of the meticulous nature of the reconnaissance can be derived from a Viet Cong lesson plan. Detailed information was required on post structure.

...make a separate report on each side of the post from outside to the center.

For example: Approaching the post from the east, we will find an open area, then a bamboo fence, barbed-wire fence No. 3, ditch No. 2, a spike field at big ditch No. 3 adjacent to the earth wall, search lights, earth wall with moat behind it, earth wall at barracks, post yard, and blockhouse. Remember to clearly note down the size of each thing and space between the obstacle and the fortification. This will be useful to each separate attacking column.²

Required information on a post's operations included:

- (1) The intelligence network for the defense of the post in its vicinity. Alarm methods and signals.
- (2) Patrol regulations, guards inside the post, guard location, guard strength, watch tours, guard rotation at the watch house, search light and flare procedures, alarm regulations, weaknesses in the guard, the direction of the enemy's primary defense.
- (3) Regulation on time and strength of patrols outside the post, both day and night.

Sometimes sappers or members of the reconnaissance team will be sent to conduct reconnaissance inside the post. Before a battle takes place, the sappers may sneak into the post at night for reconnoitering missions. Reconnoitering missions in a military post consist of

¹AG-195.

spotting the commanding officer's office, soldiers' quarters, and emplacements for heavy weapons.¹

A member of the reconnaissance unit of the 261st battalion describes an inside mission:

Once I got into the middle of Cai Be post where the district chief's office was. It was fifteen days prior to the attack and take-over of the post by our battalion. I was accompanied by two comrades armed with submachine guns to protect me in case my presence was discovered while I was nearing the post entrance. I was then wearing pants only and had in my belt a pair of pincers, a knife, and a grenade. At one hundred meters from the post I started crawling and quietly approached the post entrance with the two comrades following me. At twenty meters from the post, my comrades halted while I crawled on.

At the post entrance there was a barbed wire barricade on which hung two grenades. Behind the barricade stood a guard. I made my way between the barricade and the stakes holding up the barbed wire fence. I waited in the dark for the moment when the guard lit his cigarette. I passed two meters away from him and sneaked through the entrance. On that occasion I was unable to find out where the munitions depot was but I did discover the positions of two machine guns and the radio room. I got out at the back of the post by cutting my way through the barbed wire.²

As can be seen from the first quotation from AG-195, if the post is located near or inside a village, much of the information is gathered by the villagers. In fact, the decision to attack the post may be influenced by the attitude of the local population toward the garrison of the post.

Besides the Biet Chinh,³ the Seventh Division soldiers also behaved nicely toward the villagers. When they

¹In case regional sappers are involved, these sites are put on a drawing which will be submitted to the Military Affairs Section of the Region. In at least one case a reconnaissance team's failure to estimate correctly the troop strength of a post led to a serious defeat. The Sao Vang Division attacked an ARVN Camp in My Loc Village, Binh Dinh Province in September of 1966. A regiment was stationed at the post rather than the estimated battalion size force. A dawn counter-attack by the GVN routed the Viet Cong forces. See AG-523.

²AG-195.

³South Vietnamese troops who treat villagers well.

entered the people's houses, they knew how to speak to them and often advised them to settle into New Life hamlets in order to enjoy more security.

The Vinh Kim village committee planned to attack the Biet Chinh many times but since we could not gather enough information on their activities through the villagers, we had to give it up. The villagers also asked us why we had to attack them while they were such good men.¹

Viet Cong Agent Inside the Post

The military proselytizing section of the village committee tries to organize a network of spies in the nearby military posts. If the Viet Cong have an agent in the garrison of a GVN post, the attack on the post is timed to occur when the agent is on guard duty.

If the Front decided to destroy a post where a Front spy was living, we had first to ask his family to come to the post to call him back to the village to receive instructions. In general, the Front only launched an attack at the moment this spy was on sentry duty at night. We then used a conventional secret signal to let him know that we were ready to attack. The signal which was most often used was to turn on a flashlight three times and the spy replied by three strokes of his lighter. We acknowledged reception of his reply by turning the flashlight on once more and then we sneaked into the post. The spy would let us come into the post before opening fire. I noticed that the GVN² had lost many posts because the Front had spies to help it.

Study of Reactions of Other GVN Forces

In addition to gathering information on the GVN post to be attacked, the Viet Cong investigate the possible reactions of the forces that could be used to relieve the post under attack. The Viet Cong may know, for example, that the GVN artillery within range of the post has a reaction time of one-half hour and that air support can be provided within two hours. A study is made of the number of available infantry reinforcements, their routes of advance, and their reaction time. Careful study is given to possible sites for ambush

¹DT-99.

²DT-107.

of reinforcements. In the attack on Tan Thuan post, two of the three companies of the 514th battalion were allocated to the interception of reinforcements. Sometimes the main objective is destruction of the reinforcements and the encirclement or harassment of posts is sometimes only a trick to lure reinforcements into ambush.¹

Final Decision

When the reconnaissance and study are complete, the Military Affairs Committee holds another meeting. This is attended by leaders of all the units involved in the attack. If a majority of the committee believes that the attack should be made, the Military Affairs Committee reports to the Provincial Committee, which again reviews the proposed problem and the solution and perhaps directs some additional action. The Province Committee approves the attack only if all political, military, and logistic criteria are satisfied.²

Preparation for the Attack

After approval is given, all units begin practicing for the attack, either on a sand table or an actual stake and string replica of the target. This practice takes from three days to a month, depending on the difficulty of the target. At the end of practice, every man knows just what he is supposed to do, how he is supposed to do it, and when. Every detail of the action may be rehearsed, including when and where Main Force units will meet local forces or militia. Guerrillas guide the troops, provide laborers to carry supplies, and carry off booty and the dead. Facilities for the evacuation of wounded are set

¹ Doctrine on ambush emphasizes that it is not a passive tactic; ambushing forces are encouraged to harass or attack GVN positions to force units to the rescue.

² AG-523:

We usually carried out an attack operation only when we had obtained reliable information as to the number of enemy troops, their weapons and their position. And we always ensured that we were absolutely superior in numbers before starting the attack. If not, we preferred to avoid any contact with the enemy.

up and withdrawal procedures are established. The Rear Services staff may prepare coffins for the expected number of dead and provides porters for clearing the battlefield, carrying the injured, and collecting captured equipment.

Other activities in the attack sequence include obtaining provisions and ammunition. Rounds of ammunition to be expended by the larger caliber weapons are carefully calculated.

Secrecy Preservation Measures

The success of an attack on a post depends on the element of surprise though they usually also have numerical superiority at the place of attack. The Viet Cong must win their objective quickly before the enemy can react and bring superior fire power and forces to bear. Because of this enemy superiority an attack can succeed only if the enemy has had insufficient warning and is not ready to bring his superior capability to bear immediately or even before the battle. During the planning and preparation stage of the attack, the Viet Cong carefully limit the information available to the troops. The Viet Cong fear GVN agents in their own ranks and worry that ralliers may inform the GVN of plans.

Normally soldiers in a company (except squad leaders and higher) do not know the place to be attacked.

This kind of briefing, as a rule, always took place before the battle. The drawing of the post which was going to be attacked was hung up in front of the soldiers, but its name was not mentioned. Those who knew Ba Dua could easily recognize it. To Thao (battalion commander) pointed out to the soldiers the various posts in the Ba Dua sub-sector, enumerated the numerical strength of the unit which guarded each post, and told them about the GVN soldiers' low morale.¹

Attack was generally launched upon completion of sand table training. If the attack was not launched, the plan was considered as disclosed and canceled.

¹DT-101.

A squad leader of the 261st relates that in the attack in Cai Be district town he did not know the destination, although platoon leaders knew.

My unit was stationed in Long Tien village at that time. We moved at 4:30 PM but, as usual, I did not know what our destination was. We arrived at the battlefield at 11 PM and began to dig foxholes at once. I knew that we were going to fight but I did not know the name of the post then standing in front of me with all its electric lights sparkling all around it. I then recalled that on the previous days, all the platoon leaders of my company had attended special sessions held by my company commander, and I understood that they had gathered to learn about the plan of attack. And I realized they had kept it a secret from the squad leaders.¹

In general, such specific knowledge only goes down two echelons below the command staff.

The final concentration of troops around the post is conducted in such a manner that the destination of the units is not apparent to outside observers. In addition to careful control of information in the planning process, attacking units often take long, circuitous, and even crisscrossing routes in moving to their final attack positions. This procedure generates a good deal of noise in the GVN intelligence system. It becomes very difficult to distinguish between routine movement and movement leading up to an attack. In the attack on an ARVN 7th Division battalion occupying the Long Tien military post, a platoon leader reports:

After the terrain and the regular moves of the GVN battalion had been reconnoitered, the 514th battalion then camping in Tam Binh set out toward Long Tien. Tam Binh was very close to Long Tien but, to fool the GVN spies, the battalion first came to My Long village and came into Long Tien only on the second night.²

Tam Binh-My Long is on the camp network shown in Fig. 11. So the move may have appeared "routine" even if it were reported.

¹DT-101.

²DT-110.

Assault

The following principles summarize Viet Cong doctrine on attacking posts in the Delta:

(1) The attacking force should be superior to the force defending the post.

When the 261st battalion attacked a post and if its position was not revealed, it was almost sure that it would come out a victor because it always applied a great number of soldiers and weapons against weak defenders.¹

(2) The attacking force should be concentrated along one main axis of attack.

(3) The element of surprise should be preserved as long as possible. There is no preparatory fire; instead, under the cover of darkness, sapper elements penetrate the defense perimeter of the post.

(4) Initially the main effort of the attackers is concentrated against major targets in the post: automatic rifles, machine guns, field artillery and mortar emplacements, command posts, post communications, and ammunition dumps.

By this reason we must find every way to concentrate our strength, fire power, and efforts to annihilate the enemy main body first, then we exterminate his remaining elements.

However, this main body is usually the strongest element of the enemy. Thus, we have to take advantage of the enemy gap and weak points to exterminate his main body. For example, to attack a post, we will take advantage of the darkness and carelessness of the enemy sentries to send our sappers deep into the enemy area and attack his command post or field artillery, then open the way for guerrillas to assault and harass his defense system at the beginning.

I noticed that, in an attack against a GVN post, the very first thing the Front did was to try to destroy the telephone of the post or its telephone lines. In the attack

¹DT-85.

against the Nha Tho La post, the primary mission of the recoilless rifles and B-40's was to destroy the means of communication of the post to prevent it from calling in relief troops.¹

The attacking unit must wait until dark to move from its assembly area to the line of departure, conduct the assault and withdraw to a safe place. The time available for assault is very restricted. A number of attacks have begun around midnight.² The attacking force is divided into three elements: the sappers, heavy weapons, and the main assault units. In addition, elements of the force will take up ambush positions along roads that may be used by GVN relief forces. While the assault units are led into their battle positions by the reconnaissance detachments, the sappers, under the cover of darkness, will attempt to penetrate through the post's defense perimeter. They have two missions: (1) to prepare openings through the barbed-wire lines for the main assault units, and (2) to blow up some of the important targets inside the post. The explosions set off by the sappers signal the initiation of the main assault.

To retain surprise, units avoid preliminary fire. In the 514th's attack on Binh An Military Post, Go Cong, a platoon leader relates:

We crawled towards the post silently. When we reached the first barbed-wire fence, the first sapper destroyed it with a mine. The second sapper jumped ahead immediately after the first blast and destroyed the second barbed-wire fence by exploding a second mine. The third sapper did the same after the second blast, then, a sort of wooden bridge was thrown down over the ditch and the fourth sapper rushed ahead to blow up the blockhouse wall. All this was done so quickly that the soldier who manned the blockhouse did not react in time and got killed, while the four sappers were still alive.³

¹DT-85. B-40s are rocket launchers, better known as Bazookas.

²DT-85.

³DT-110. See also DT-85.

AMBUSHES

Ambush of a GVN Battalion by 514th Battalion, January 1965

The 514th Battalion left Tam Binh and moved toward the GVN battalion at the Ba Dua post at Long Tien. To cover its movements, the 514th moved to Long Tien by way of My Long. It took two nights to reach its destination, taking positions for the ambush at 0100 hours the second night.

The 514th command staff knew that the GVN battalion left the post at the intersection every day and moved toward My Long. The exact time of their departure was not known.

At 1300 hours the GVN moved out of the Ba Dua post. The 514th's second company opened the assault when the GVN forces were strung out. The attack of the first company split the GVN forces. The rear of the column was forced back toward the post. The GVN company at the front of the column was isolated and encircled by the second and third companies. The fighting lasted 45 minutes and resulted in the alleged loss of the entire GVN forward company. Viet Cong losses were allegedly one dead and five wounded.¹

The Conduct of Ambushes²

The account above is typical of Viet Cong ambush tactics. The events that were reported rest on a set of elaborate procedures, rules of conduct, and tactical principles that the Viet Cong have learned and then widely disseminated in lesson plans, manuals, and after-action reports. Every ambush, of course, does not follow each

¹DT-110.

²Ambushes are used, of course, by all armies and the elements of an ambush are standard. However the emphasis in various armies is different. The Viet Cong use the ambush extensively because it is a "poor man's" tactic in that the element of surprise compensates for the lack of sophisticated weaponry. Evidence now indicates that the United States is using the ambush tactic with greater frequency and its procedures are much like those of the Viet Cong. See FM 21-75, Combat Training of the Individual Soldier and Patrolling, Department of the Army, January 1962, pp. 173-179.

procedure exactly. Many procedures have become routine or implicit so that little attention has to be paid to them. Nevertheless, the procedures we shall describe explicitly provide the foundation of the ambush tactic.

In general, the conduct of an ambush requires a thorough understanding of the enemy's situation and of his patterns of movement. The minimum essential elements of information are route and direction of movement, troop and weapon strength, and the approximate time of passage through the ambush site. Such information is acquired from sources within the GVN or from carefully observed patterns of GVN behavior.

Selection of Ambush Site

An ambush site is selected in an area consistent with the unit's estimate of the enemy's direction of movement. To determine these areas, constant daily surveillance is conducted to confirm GVN missions and patterns of activity.

Criteria examined when choosing an ambush site include: terrain that

- (1) provides concealment and prevents detection of ambushing troops,
- (2) enables ambushing troops to deploy, encircle, and divide the enemy. In other words, terrain that permits the deployment of a lead-blocking element, a main element, a rear-blocking element, and possibly other elements.
- (3) allows for many heavy weapons emplacements to provide sustained fire from beginning to end.
- (4) enables a unit to set up observation posts for early detection of the enemy,
- (5) permits the secret movement of troops to ambush positions and the dispersal of troops during withdrawal.

In addition to meeting the five criteria above, the effects of terrain on enemy troops is also considered: desirable terrain

- (1) forces moving enemy troops to pile up and slows them down,
- (2) prevents enemy troops from deploying in dispersed formation and obstructs withdrawal,
- (3) prevents enemy troops from using all of their heavy weapons or presents difficulties in mutual fire support.

If the terrain has features and areas that could enable many troops to deploy, or retreat, it may be denied by mine fields and spike pits or planting of grenades. Ditches on the side of the site may be mined. One whole side of a road may be mined. And fires on areas favorable to enemy dispersal may be prepared.

Planning and Preparation

The first action is a thorough reconnaissance of the terrain to satisfy as many as possible of the criteria discussed above. Then cadres and men become familiar with the enemy situation, terrain characteristics, their unit's mission, and secrecy requirements.¹

Sand table training and rehearsal aim at helping the cadres understand ambush procedures.² When a battalion is involved, participants

¹The procedure involved in reconnoitering a road requires that the recon cadres observe topography relative to the road axis. They note high points, trees, jungle, cultivated fields, rivers, and streams up to 3 meters along both sides of the road. With respect to the road itself, the recon cadres make observations as to whether the surface of the road is wide or narrow; made of dirt, stone, or asphalt; curved or straight; rough or smooth. They also notice if the road was built by cutting or filling. It was also necessary to observe the population's movement patterns in the area. In addition, reconnaissance cadres must obtain intelligence on the routes of convoys and GVN forces escorting the convoy. If possible, the cadre always tried to learn the patrol method, strength of the patrol force, and the command level. In order to obtain the necessary information they often had to construct an observation station on a high but safe point with good visibility of the target. They destroy the observation post and camouflage the remains when it is abandoned.

²However, the sand table practice can be waived if all the cadres are present during the terrain reconnaissance and thoroughly

in the sand table exercise include: The Battalion Party committee, command staff, rear service, specialized service branches, cell leaders of all observation posts, political cadres, and those command cadres of subordinate detachments two grades below the conducting unit -- company commanders and platoon leaders.

Sand table practice may be broken down into three phases -- prior to opening fire, upon opening fire, withdrawal -- to insure complete preparation. The unit commander gives a terrain briefing on the sand table and an evaluation of the enemy situation, repeats the Battalion Party committee decisions, summarizes missions and positions.

Logistics planning receives as much attention as combat planning. Enemy capabilities, equipment, and concepts of operation are analyzed to decide on the proper use of weapons and equipment. Ammunition requirements are carefully calculated.

A final checking process occurs with the following questions to be answered:

How strong is the enemy? How do we fight him? Where? When? What means and measures do we have at our disposal to knock down the enemy opposition? How is secrecy maintained? How would the enemy oppose us? How would we react? What will we do when the enemy is destroyed -- should we advance or pull out, where and how?

Secrecy Preservation

The commander must try to preserve secrecy and retain surprise, the decisive factor in ambush. Every effort is made to keep the ambush time and site secret throughout the unit's investigation of the enemy situation, its study of terrain features, and the conduct of various deception measures.

Troops also get special training in secrecy preservation. The Viet Cong finds that troops inexperienced in or unfamiliar with ambush understand their assigned missions, or if the ambush is a small and simple one.

tactics are often subject to stress while waiting for the enemy.¹ Prior to the occupation of combat positions, cadres attempt to keep the troops calm and make them implement all regulations pertaining to the preservation of secrecy.

The ambush site itself is kept under close surveillance. A warning element observes the site continually to find out if the GVN has discovered any traces of the ambush or has prepared ambush positions of its own.

In movement to the site the formation is tailored to the terrain. Movement in densely inhabited areas is avoided. During the movement, silence is maintained. In case of movement in daytime, camouflage is used to avoid air observation or spies.

When the occupation of combat positions occurs at night, the last inspection is made at dawn. Some signs of preparation that are very hard to see at night are easily detected in the daytime. Some elements -- for example, the warning element -- deployed near the site may have to withdraw at dawn.

Ambush Formation

The minimum components of an ambush are: lead-blocking element, main assault element, rear-blocking element, and observation and command posts.¹ Other components -- for example, an element opposite the main force -- may be added if the ambush is a large one or terrain is unfavorable.

The lead-blocking element uses sudden firepower to inflict casualties upon the enemy and disorganize his formation, forcing him to halt or concentrate.

¹U.S. terminology is somewhat different from the Viet Cong's. U.S. doctrine states that an ambush force is composed of assault and security elements. The assault elements are responsible for destroying the enemy whereas the security elements seal off the area to prevent escape from the ambush or to prevent help from reaching the ambushed unit. See FM 21-75, pp. 173-179.

The opponent's lead elements must be halted at any cost. The lead elements usually have very strong firepower; therefore they are firmly and strongly engaged in combat. In order to affect the track, bridges and roads must be sabotaged, obstructions must be set, or equipment must be damaged in order to force the whole convoy to stop.

If the ambush is set by a battalion, the lead blocking element would be a platoon reinforced with Claymore Mine #10, anti-tank mines, one or two recoilless rifles (RR), one or two heavy machine guns and 60 mm or 81 mm mortars.

The lead-blocking element provides the main assault element with an opportunity to close in or to begin the attack. When the main assault element begins to encircle and split the enemy, the lead-blocking element coordinates with the main assault element.

The mission of the main assault element is to split up the enemy and destroy his main force. It usually deploys along the flank of the enemy formation, it may account for sixty to seventy percent of the entire strength of the ambushing unit and will be reinforced with anti-tank weapons (recoilless rifles, bazookas) and anti-personnel mines.

The rear-blocking element usually makes up ten to twenty percent of the ambushing force. Its mission varies with the enemy situation. If the entire enemy force moves into the ambush site, the rear-blocking element attacks from the rear. If the rear of an enemy column stays out, the rear-blocking element has the mission of cutting it off. Part of it neutralizes the enemy and protects the flank of the main assault element.

The rear-blocking element attacked from the rear and cooperated with the battalion main force with heavy weapons such as 51 mm and 60 mm mortars, and recoilless rifles firing at long range to wear down the rear element of the opponent.

The remainder coordinates with the main assault element to envelop and destroy that fraction of the enemy force that has fallen into ambush.

An ambush usually has several observation posts (one main observation post and some secondary ones) designed to detect the enemy as early as possible and report to higher headquarters. The missions of the observation posts are to detect the enemy in his:

- (1) movement toward friendly ambush site;
- (2) actual formation;
- (3) pockets of resistance during the engagement and elements moving to attack the flank;
- (4) reinforcements;
- (5) routes of withdrawal.

The degree of visibility allowed by the weather and terrain features determines the number of observation posts. Observation posts are deployed to facilitate the transmission of reports to the commander of the ambush force. At least two commo-liaison systems link the command posts and the various elements. The unit commander thus ensures continuous liaison with his unit through redundancy in the communication system.

Creating Conditions for Ambush

Units are instructed to create the conditions for ambush.

In La Nga ambush battle, if we had allowed the enemy to move freely, as usual, the convoy would have entered the ambush site too early, permitting enemy aircraft and artillery to intervene when the first shots were fired, causing us much trouble. The Command Committee was very flexible. It sent some cells out to delay the enemy step by step, slowing down his advance, wearing him down and making him underestimate friendly forces. Not until 4:30 p.m. did the convoy fall into the main ambush site, where it was annihilated. Enemy aircraft and artillery did not have enough time to intervene as darkness set in.

A unit may send out small cells to delay the enemy, and to make him underestimate the Viet Cong unit facing him. Various elements may surround or attack posts to ambush reinforcements and kill GVN administrative personnel. Bridges and roads may be sabotaged causing traffic jams, forcing GVN units to go out to make repairs. In these ways a unit can make a convoy fall into the ambush site at a time preferred by the Viet Cong, when GVN or U.S. aircraft and artillery do not have enough time to react before dark.

ATTACK BY MANEUVERING FORCES

The discussion in this section is based on a captured Viet Cong top secret document.¹ The document describes the basic principles of the tactic of attacks by maneuvering forces of battalion or regimental size. It distills relevant experience from a number of battles fought in Western Nam Bo. At the end of 1964, the document was approved by the headquarters of the Western Nam Bo Military Region as tactical training material for cadres and troops.

In the area of Western Nam Bo, the defensive tactics and the ambush tactics described earlier have been transformed into plans and preparations for offensive tactics against GVN forces that are detected within ten or more kilometers of the village bivouac. In addition to making plans and preparations for possible defensive action in and around the village in which it bivouacs, the battalion (or regiment) also selects one or two battle sites favorable to attack in an area ten to fifteen kilometers from the village. Contingency battle plans and preparations are made for possible offensive operations on these two battlefields.

¹The document analyzes tactics in the following battles: Tan Phu battle in October 1963, Bau Sen battle in 1961, the attack on heliborne reinforcements at Vinh Thuan in March 1964, and the Xeo Mon counter-sweep operation in August 1964.

No inferences about procedures in 1967 should be made from this discussion.

If a GVN force is detected, a small detachment makes contact with the enemy force and tries to lure it onto one of the prepared battlefields. In the meantime, the main force completes its preparations for battle and advances toward the preselected battlefield. From this point on, the battle follows the patterns described in the section on ambush operations. Various elements of the Viet Cong force maneuver to encircle and then to destroy the GVN force. If these maneuvers are successful, the Viet Cong in the ensuing battle have many of the advantages that characterize ambushes and defensive operations: prepared battle plans, terrain of their own choosing, and possibly the help of previously prepared fortifications.

The tactic of attack by maneuvering forces was designed for the terrain prevalent in Western Nam Bo. The terrain in large areas of Western Nam Bo is similar to that found in Dinh Tuong province.¹

This document points out that the terrain in Western Nam Bo imposes the following limitations on GVN forces operating in this area:

Mechanized and artillery activities are limited, particularly in the rainy season. Use of APCs is restricted to high and dry ground; elsewhere the APCs cannot be used, or if they are used, their effectiveness is negligible.

Artillery must be moved either on roads or by helicopters which transport them from position to position in support of operations. Guns are also stationed in various outposts to provide fire support in a given area. Their mobility is restricted, and they cannot be used to the maximum.

Terrain features in the western region noticeably restrict combined operations of enemy services and arms. In some instances, enemy infantry operates alone, giving us opportunities to disorganize and destroy him.

¹One area of Western Nam Bo differs from the terrain found in Dinh Tuong. In the Ca Mau area the U Minh forest grows along the coast and consists of indigo undergrowth plants. Here the terrain is swampy; water floods the area, forming deep trenches and fish ponds surrounded by high banks. In this area waterways are essential for communication.

Terrain features oblige the enemy to maneuver along axes of communication, canals, creeks, and rivers in column formation, since line formation is impossible.

Troop deployment is difficult and slow. No more than one or two battalions can be engaged in various detachments. It is thus easy for us to concentrate and separately destroy each column and detachment.

Preparations

As described above, a battalion (or regiment) has a pattern of movement within an assigned area of a province (or military region). Prior to changing bivouac, the Battalion Party Committee convenes and determines a new bivouacking area, selects two or three battlegrounds near it, and sketches tentative operational plans. The military commander of the unit carries out the decision of the committee and directs the staff to submit plans for troop movement.

The staff sends a reconnaissance patrol to the new bivouac area. The unit must survey and map the bivouac area,¹ designate alternate battlegrounds, possible routes of approach of GVN units, and routes of advance for the Viet Cong unit. All the tasks of the reconnaissance group are to be completed at the end of the night during which the battalion moves to the new bivouac. On the morning of the first day in the new bivouac, military commanders and commanding cadres of various detachments are briefed on the surveyed terrain features. The movement of a battalion during the night to the new bivouac, its deployment in that area, and the construction of fortifications follow the procedures and timing described in Section V.

Initial operational plans are prepared for the two or three potential battlegrounds in the neighborhood of the new bivouac. One of these plans is designated as primary and is used as a basis for detailed study of the coordination and deployment of the various units of the battalion. A standard procedure is drawn up for organizing the troops into combat formations designed for the

¹See the discussion of reconnaissance units in Section II.

designated battlegrounds. If a GVN force is detected in the area, preliminary plans are refined and specific missions assigned to the troops during the advance of the regiment to the battleground.

The same document emphasizes that the bivouac area and the primary designated battleground must be "urgently prepared" during the night when the battalion arrives in the new bivouac area. It does not specify what "preparation" consists of, but in other documents the term "prepared terrain" designates the transformation of the terrain to provide the troops with certain advantages during a battle -- building trenches, bunkers, and heavy weapons emplacements; planting mines and booby traps; and preparing concealed, secure routes for battlefield mobility and subsequent withdrawal. We can assume that some of these same measures are implemented in "preparing" the primary battleground. In addition, the party cadres prepare plans for the coordination of the activities of local guerrillas and civilians in case of a battle with GVN forces.

Sighting the Enemy

A member of a Viet Cong reconnaissance squad describes how the unit keeps an advancing GVN force under surveillance:

We stop when we are about 300 or 500 meters from the advancing unit. At that distance we can see what the ARVN soldiers are doing. We retreat while they advance, and we always keep the same distance from them. Our squad will then be split into three cells. The first cell stays 300 meters from the enemy, the second cell 100 meters farther, and the third 100 meters from the second. The last two cells will remain still while the first cell pulls back. When the first cell meets the second cell, the reconnaissance unit becomes the second cell. The first cell will hurry back and take a position 100 meters from the third cell waiting for their turn to come up again. One of them will have to run fast to the command staff and report the situation. This being done, he will have to come back to his cell at once. The same procedure must be followed by the second cell, and then by the third, and that is why the battalion command staff, although at a distance, could be constantly informed of the ARVN soldiers' moves.¹

¹DT-119.

When a GVN unit is detected, the battalion Party Committee convenes and decides whether to engage the enemy unit. If it decides that the unit should attack, further decisions must be made.

Advance Detachment

The initial contact with the GVN forces is made by an advance detachment. It moves out as soon as the enemy is detected. The detachment is small and lightly equipped; however, it must have enough combat capability to contain the enemy in a predetermined area. Its strength varies from ten to thirty-three percent of the total force.

The advance detachment has three missions:

- (1) make contact with the GVN force; force the enemy onto the defensive and report continuously and accurately on the evolution of the situation to higher echelons;
- (2) force the GVN units into maneuvering into one of the pre-selected battlegrounds;¹
- (3) contain the GVN force for a period of time ranging from one to three hours. This length of time is necessary for the meeting of the Party Committee, organization of the troops for combat, and for the movement of the forces from the bivouac area to the battleground -- the distance is approximately 15 kilometers and is supposed to be traversed at the rate of 7 kilometers per hour.

Continuous liaison is maintained with the forward command post. The forward command post is initially located ten kilometers from the bivouac area and then moves forward behind the advance detachment.²

¹The captured enemy top secret document referred to earlier states that the detachment must force "the enemy into a disadvantageous area almost in consistence with the battle plan." In another passage it states that the detachment "...will intercept, attrite, and bait the enemy into an anticipated area, while our main force maneuvers from a concealed staging area to close in, attack, and destroy the enemy."

²On their way from the bivouac area, the various battalion detachments receive their assignments, reorganize for combat at the base of departure, and then they continue their advance to the battleground. The base of departure appears to serve the purpose fulfilled by the U.S. "attack position" and "line of departure."

The main command post is located at the base of departure throughout the battle. The Battalion Party committee and the military commanders are also located here, monitoring reports from the forward command post.

Advance from the Bivouac Area

On their march from the bivouac area to the base of departure, the elements of the battalion move in columns along one, two, or even three concealed axes. The main axis of advance is a route following canal banks and orchard edges. Deception may be practiced; for example, the document states that in day movement smoke can be used to attract the enemy aircraft away from the axis of movement.

Antiaircraft cells are dispersed along the axis of advance and alternatively take up firing positions and move to the next position. Of three cells, two are in firing position and the third is moving forward. This procedure is to be followed until the battalion reaches the line of departure. The firepower of the antiaircraft cells is concentrated on the main line of advance.

The Attack

Attack formation is similar to ambush formation. The advance detachment, consisting of one company, intercepts the enemy force. The company following the advance detachment usually serves as the main assault element. The next company serves as the rear blocking element. One platoon may be detached to serve as a battalion reserve.

Tactics states:

When the rear blocking element occupies its assigned positions, the entire battalion opens fire. Battalion mortar fire is first concentrated to help the rear blocking element seize its area. Then it is switched to aid the main assault element. As the battle proceeds, mortars are attached to or accompany the infantry of the main assault element to provide fire against targets of opportunity.

Recoilless rifles are positioned along the flank of the front blocking elements to provide concentrated fire on APCs, if there are

any. The battalion's antiaircraft elements are assigned to protect the battalion command post and support the main assault element.

Battalion Rear Services

All supplies, including reserve supplies, are provided in advance and transported by land and waterways. The infantry carries enough small arms ammunition -- rifles, submachine guns, machine guns, automatic rifles and grenades -- for one day's fighting. Resupply of expended ammunition takes place during the night following the attack. Combat units carry one-third of one day's basic load of ammunition for mortars, 50 caliber machine guns, and recoilless rifles. Rear services usually replace expended quantities of these munitions sometime during the day of fighting.

At least one forward aid station on the axis of maneuver is set up to provide timely treatment and evacuation of the wounded to the main medical stations. Local civilians and the ammunition transport platoon on their return trips from the battlefield help in the evacuation of the wounded.

VII. FOOD AND AMMUNITION

This section discusses logistics procedures in Dinh Tuong. We concentrate on how battalions in Dinh Tuong supplied themselves with food, ammunition, and porters. We have made no attempt to present a complete analysis of all the support required by Viet Cong battalions. Rather the emphasis is on some of the procedures battalions use in obtaining resources. These procedures, of course, reflect the need for given levels of support.

RICE SURPLUS

The amount of rice available to battalions from contributions, purchase, or from stockpiles depends on the overall balance between rice consumption and production in Dinh Tuong. In Dinh Tuong, villages controlled by the Viet Cong are capable of producing a large rice surplus. For example, the large circle in Fig. 2 covers the densest part of the camp site network of the 514th battalion discussed in Section V. At least twelve villages within the circle were under Viet Cong control at the end of 1965. In 1963, these twelve villages alone had a labor force of about 45,000 and 147 square kilometers of riceland.¹ Total civilian consumption per day was under 30,000 kilograms. Total annual production in these villages was about 19.4 million kilograms.² Thus the average daily supply of milled rice was about 53,000 kilograms, which leaves a substantial surplus over consumption.³ The 514th battalion required about 500 kilograms per

¹This circle covers about half the province -- the scene of most Main and Local Force activity.

²See James B. Hendry, The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community, Michigan State University, Vietnam Advisory Group, December 1959.

³In the small circle around Binh Phuc Nhut, there is less Viet Cong control. Food could be brought from Binh Ninh or from the Viet Cong villages in the large circle. The food supply problem then becomes a portage problem. Portage is discussed below.

day. The difference between battalion requirements and the surplus leaves the Viet Cong able to tolerate fairly large reductions in production.¹ Nevertheless, the constant mobility of Main and Local Forces has imposed strains on the distribution system.

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING FOOD

Initially, battalions relied on contributions. As they increased in size, and food taxation increased, they changed to food purchase; in some areas battalions have been forced to a stockpile system. Between 1964 and 1966 food purchase was the normal procedure.

Beginning in mid-1964 the people stopped giving us rice, and would only sell it to us. When we were in the villages, we made propaganda and explained to them the need for rice contributions.... The local cadres, being overzealous, always exaggerated the orders of the superiors, and collected more than was asked of them, even five or ten times as much. For this reason, the people now refuse to give us rice, instead they sell it to us.²

Units could ordinarily obtain enough rice although not without a certain amount of persuasion or coercion. However, members of battalions complained that their food purchase allowance was inadequate for dietary supplements.

For instance, a 10-man squad received a total sum of 70 piasters. Rice costs 7 piasters a liter in the liberated areas. The squad had to spend 52 piasters on rice and thus had only 18 piasters left to buy food for ten persons. What could they buy with 18 piasters? In fact, we only had bean sauce or bean curd to eat with rice. Very often we scattered to look for vegetables to supplement our diet.³

Rear Services cadres from the battalion would be sent to the village whose hamlets were selected for bivouac. These cadres coordinated with the Village Party Chapter.

¹Reductions in production could, of course, have an impact on units outside of the province.

²DT-7.

³DT-70.

...before a battalion arrived in a village, a Rear Services cadre was sent down to the village in advance to take care of the supply problem. The Party Chapter, therefore, knew about the impending arrival of the troops and arranged everything in advance...

Whenever a unit came to stay in a village, the Party Chapter there had to take care of food supply for the troops. The chapter sent women to the market. Each time, they sent many women to the market -- sometimes a few dozen -- to buy food, because if only a few went they would each have to carry too much food back and this would arouse the suspicion of the GVN. Each woman bought a little food, and if anyone asked them they said that they were buying food to commemorate the death anniversary of their ancestors.¹

Because of refugee movements, this food purchase system tended to break down in some areas as the insurgency continued. The population in some areas controlled by the Viet Cong moved into areas controlled by the GVN. An assistant squad leader in the 514th battalion states:

It was very easy for us to get food supplies in 1962 and 1963. But, starting in 1964, it became more and more difficult for us to get food supplies, because many villagers left their villages due to bombings and shellings. In many areas there were no people left, and if some of them still stayed there, they built huts in the middle of the ricefields and lived there to avoid bombings and shellings. This was the situation in Tan Phu, Long Tien, Long Trung, Cam Son, and Xuan Son villages. A number of the villagers went to live in GVN areas....

The squad cadres proposed to the higher ranking cadres that the quartermaster buy rice, dry fish, soy sauce, and chao and distribute them to the various squads. So starting in 1966 the quartermaster bought rice for the troops, and each of the fighters was given two piasters per day to buy other food items. There were ten men in each squad, so each day the squad received 20 piasters which it spent on soy sauce, chao, and so on. These food items were also bought by the quartermaster, and the squads paid the quartermaster when they got their rations. The food was bought at the market by the people for the quartermaster.²

¹DT-140.

²DT-125. This source probably overstates the difficulty of obtaining food in these areas. In December 1966 and January 1967, both the 514th and 261st battalions were operating in these very same areas.

Thus, the problem that did exist was solved by greater centralization of food purchasing.

As a result of these population movements and disruptions caused by military campaigns a system of depots has been set up in some parts of Dinh Tuong.

In previous years, whenever we moved into a populated area, the 261st battalion bought food for the troops there. This year (1965) many people have left and the supply of food is more difficult. For example, the Commercial Canal does not have any people living there any more and the Front has had to set up Quartermaster depots and every time the battalion goes there, it draws a ration for the soldiers. Every time a ration is received from a depot we usually have to get enough to last each person three days, and the battalion has to figure the movement so that after three days we can pick up another supply at another depot. This year (1965) the Front has put out instructions to the villages to stockpile rice for the use of the units.¹

LOCAL AMMUNITION SUPPLIES

As noted above, ammunition expenditures were carefully calculated before each battle. Local resupply was also carefully calculated. After a battle, the 261st battalion might go to a predetermined storage site to be resupplied.

I don't know where our ammunition came from. I only know that before a battle, ammo was stored in a pre-selected place. After fighting the entire battalion had to go there to obtain fresh munitions to replace those used during the fight.²

In the case of the 514th battalion resupply ordinarily took about only one day because the activities of the battalion's rear services unit were closely coordinated with those of the battalion.

Usually, it took the 514th Battalion one day to be resupplied with ammunition after an attack, because the Rear Services unit always had everything ready for this. Only in the case of surprise attacks by the GVN -- for

¹DT-101.

²AG-195.

example, in cases when the battalion or the company had to fight against a GVN sweep operation -- was the supply of ammunition delayed, because the Rear Services unit didn't have ammunition ready to resupply it. In this case, it took the unit from two to six days to be resupplied with ammunition. For example, during a sweep operation defense in Hung Thanh My Village in Chau Thanh District in either August or September 1963, my company used up to 40 percent of our ammunition. After the battle, it took us up to four days to be resupplied with ammunition.¹

Because there could be a lag of several days in ammunition resupply, units on occasion try to hedge by hiding small arms ammunition.

I think that the reason for this hiding of ammunition is that experience has shown that if a company runs out of ammunition, it will be three or four days before they get a new supply, and if during that time they have to beat off an ARVN sweep operation they would be at a severe disadvantage. As a result, the company commanders usually hide ammunition for their own protection.²

Before a battle Rear Services brings together stocks of ammunition that have previously been cached in villages.

In provinces like Dinh Tuong and Kien Hoa we turn over the ammunition to the village authorities to hide. If we are not in a hurry to move, the battalion turns over the ammunition to the village Party Chapter Secretary, but if we have to move in a hurry, it is given to the head of the Military Affairs Section in the village.

...some of it is specifically sent to a village to be held in reserve until the unit has a battle in that area, at which time it will be available for use. The 261st Battalion has sent ammunition to almost all the villages.³

¹DT-125. See also DT-107.

²DT-101. This cadre believes that the movement patterns of the 261st Battalion are keyed to the caches of ammunition. But presumably the caches can be adjusted to an expected pattern of movement.

³DT-101. The Region 2 Military Affairs Committee had special caches for the larger weapons.

AMMUNITION FLOWS

Movement of weapons and ammunition into Dinh Tuong occurred on the routes indicated in Fig. 18.¹ The procedure was to gather porters from villages along the routes, use the porters for short hauling and then transfer the ammunition to porters gathered from the next village on the route.

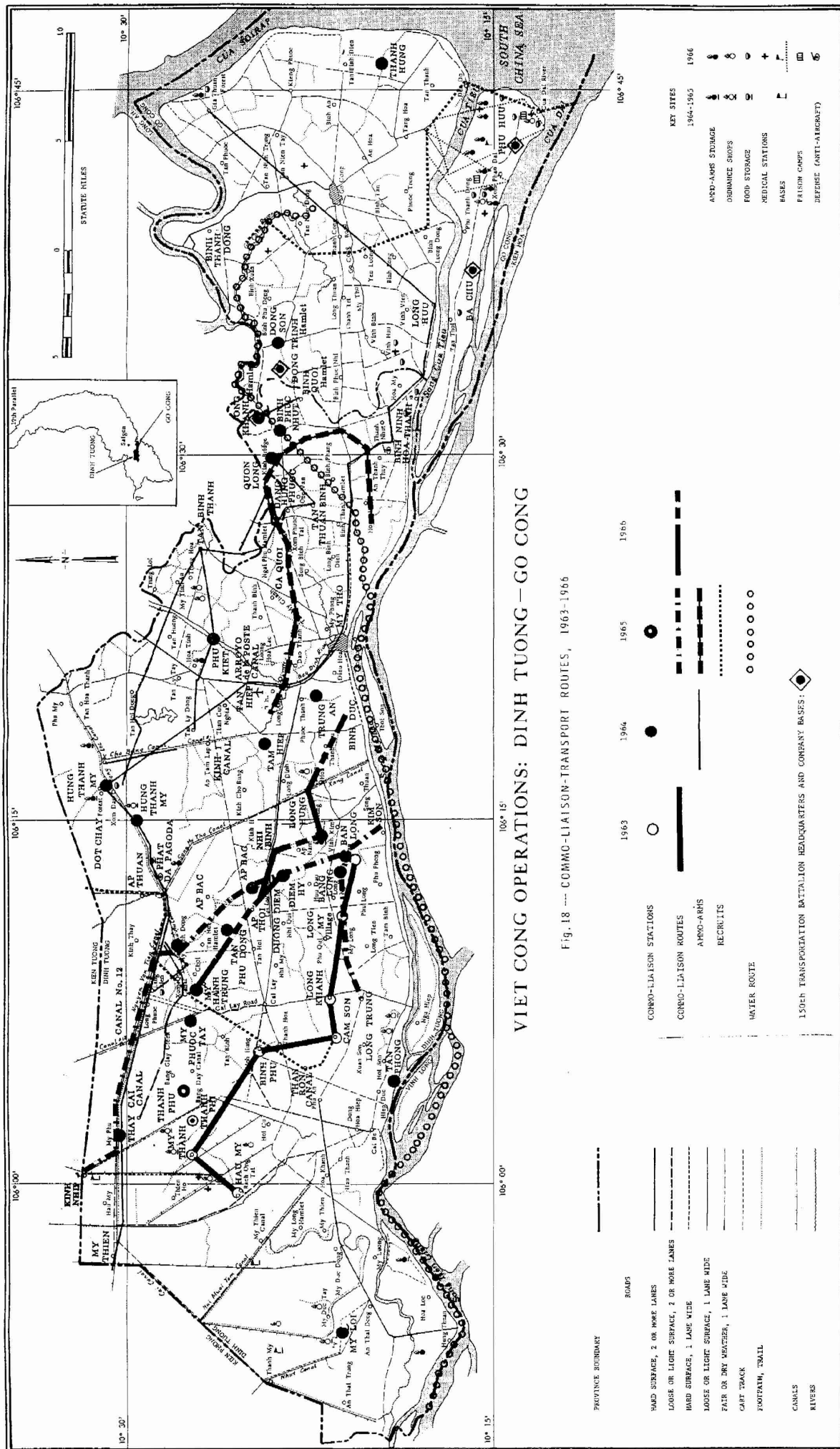
Figure 19 shows the use of porters in Dinh Tuong as described in the quotation below. Villagers reportedly accepted duty as porters because they were exempt from draft and because they would be fined if they did not volunteer.

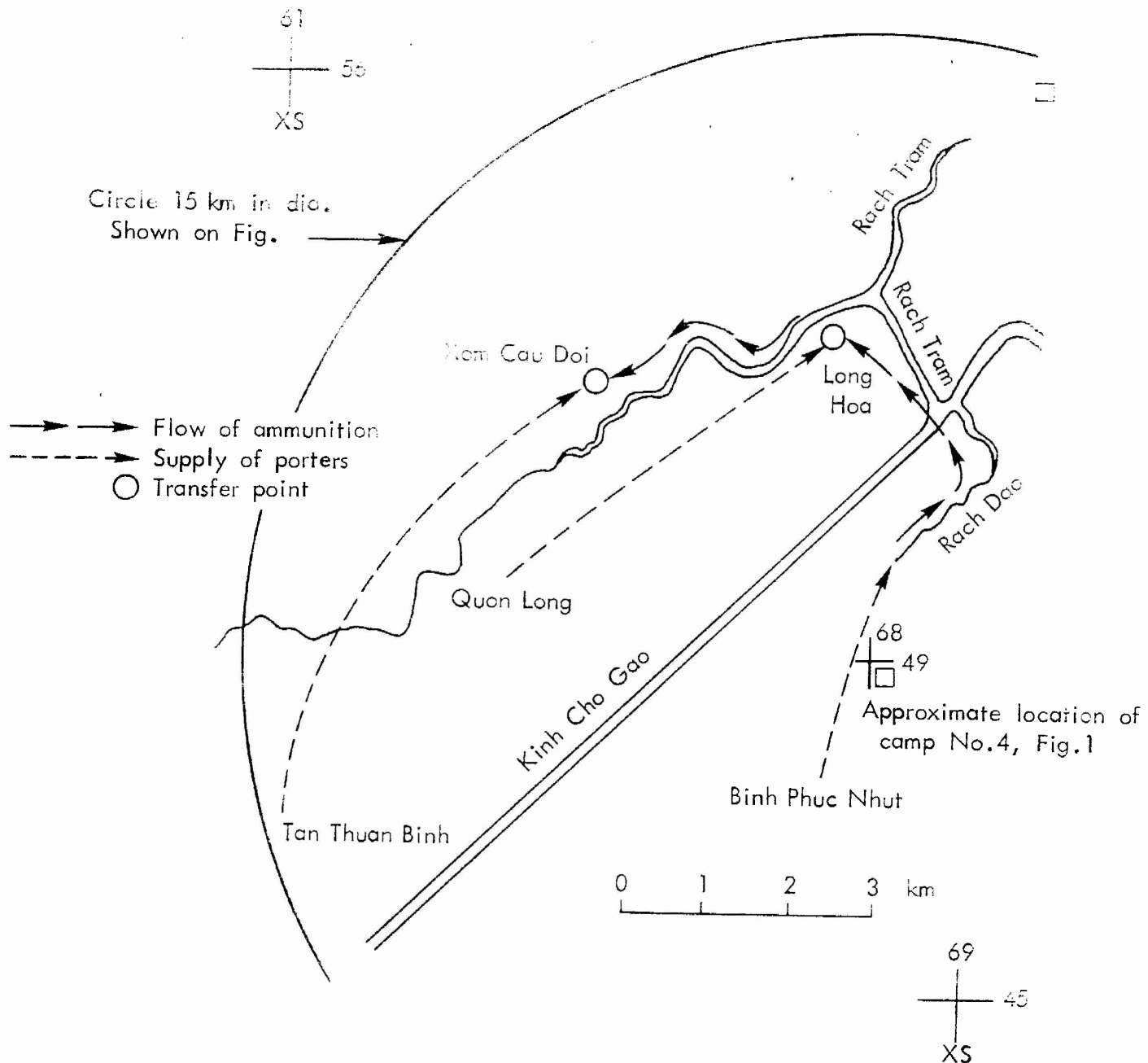
...the villagers were satisfied with this duty, even though they had to carry heavy loads and to march at night, because in working on transportation, they were exempted from military obligation. In the villagers' eyes, being drafted by the Front was considered equivalent to being killed on the battle field. Experience has shown that many of those who have joined the Front units have not come back. Therefore they thought it would be better to work on transportation than to be led away to a military unit.

Moreover, those who did not want to join the porter team had to pay 15 VN\$ for each trip. If they stayed home a full month, they would have to pay about 300 VN\$, and this was too heavy a contribution to bear. The old were also mobilized to carry ammunition, otherwise they had to stand guard at the river bank at night.²

¹Figure 18 is an incomplete composite constructed from sources covering several years. Ammunition destined for other provinces also flowed on these routes. Water routes also exist in Dinh Tuong. One is shown in Fig. 18. Dinh Tuong's commo-liaison routes are, of course, used in transporting resources to other provinces in the Delta. See DT-99.

²DT-90. See also DT-124.





"The porters had to gather in Long Hoa hamlet. There is a liaison station in Long Hoa which is manned with about twenty armed youths. These liaison agents received the ammunition from the porters coming from Binh Phuc Nhut and handed it over to the Quon Long porters. I was told that the Binh Phuc Nhat people carried the ammunition along the Rach Dao creek, crossed the Kinh Cho Gao canal and paddled alongside the Rach Tram creek before arriving at Long Hoa hamlet. Then it was the turn of the Quon Long people who had to carry that ammunition along the next segment of the same creek to Xom Cau Doi. After that, the ammunition was turned over to the Tan Thuan Binh villagers who had to carry it to another destination which I don't know." (DT-124, a civilian rallier; see also DT-90.)

Fig.19—Example of the use of ammunition transportation teams in Dinh Tuong province

Appendix A

HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE 514TH, 261ST, AND 263RD BATTALIONS

THE 514TH BATTALION

The 514th Province Battalion was organized in 1961 with one platoon (30 men). After its first battle, a second platoon of 30 men was formed. A third platoon was formed after a countersweep operation at My Lang netted a large number of weapons; the three platoons then equalled a company. In August 1962 a second company was formed.

The 514th usually trained at a site near the Commercial Canal (Nguyen Van Tiep). A GVN attack on this training site annihilated the second company and inflicted heavy casualties on the first company. The party then decided to strengthen the 514th by withdrawing enough manpower from six districts in the province to maintain two companies.

In 1962 each of the first and second companies consisted of three platoons of 30 men with a reconnaissance squad of 10 men. The two companies were led by a battalion staff composed of a battalion commander, deputy battalion commander, and battalion political officer. Each company had a commander, deputy commanding officer, and a political officer. Each platoon had three squads. Each squad had a leader and an assistant leader, and was broken down into three cells composed of a leader and two members.

In the middle of 1963 a third company was formed. The mission of this third company was to assist the first company until the end of 1963. But in 1964 the third company switched its area of operation to aid the second company. In July-August 1964, a fourth company was formed, but it was not equipped until April 1965.

In early summer of 1965 the composition and numerical strength of the 514th was as follows:

1st Company:	150 men
2nd Company:	140 men
3rd Company:	140 men
4th Company:	80 men
5th Company:	<u>90</u> men
Total:	600 men

There were about 200 cadres. Most of the cadres had received training courses in handling heavy weapons such as 12.7 mm rifles and 81 mm mortars. The cadres included medics and administrative personnel. The 4th company was an anti-aircraft unit and was armed with machine guns (30) and 15 recoilless rifles.

The fifth company was under the direct control of the Dinh Tuong Province Military Affairs Section. When this company joined the 514th battalion for an attack, it bore the designation of the fifth company.¹

A rear service company was associated with the combat companies. It was responsible for the receipt and issue of weapons, ammunition, and so on, to the combat companies. Each platoon of the rear services company was responsible for a particular section of the 514th's supply routes.

Up until April 1965, the combat companies of the 514th operated somewhat independently of one another. Originally the first company operated in Chau Thanh, Cai Lay, and Cai Be. The second company operated in Hoa Dong, Cho Gao, and Go Cong. After April 1965, they operated together as a battalion with a battalion command staff.

In 1965-1966 recruits had to be used as replacements for battle losses. These recruits required two to three months of training. Consequently, the effectiveness of the 514th was greatly reduced

Aside from their usual combat missions, each of the three infantry companies had a special mission: Company 1 specialized in raids, Company 2 specialized in attacks on posts, and Company 3 specialized

¹Characteristically it was equipped with 3 recoilless rifles (DKZ 75's), two submachine guns, several red stock rifles, carbines, and machine guns. Only volunteers and soldiers with proved front records were assigned to this company.

in ambushes. Of the two combat support companies, Company 4 was a machine gun company, and Company 5 was a 57 mm and 75 mm recoilless rifle company. The battalion also had a signal platoon and a reconnaissance-intelligence platoon.

THE 261ST BATTALION

Historical information on the 261st Regional Main Force battalion is very sketchy. However, we do know that prior to 1962 it was the unique Main Force unit that the Viet Cong possessed in Central South Vietnam.¹ In 1963, the Viet Cong built up another battalion, the 263rd Dong Thap Battalion, and around July 1964 the 3rd Battalion was set up and designated the 265th Dong Thap Battalion. After having built the 265th Battalion, the Viet Cong combined all three into the 1st Dong Thap Regiment. It is responsible to Headquarters, Region 2. In August 1964 the 261st was composed of 500 men organized into six companies. Its commanding cadres are regroupes. It is alleged to be a highly skilled unit. For example, the great majority of its platoon leaders have had more than ten years' combat experience. Elements of the 261st coordinate regularly with elements of the 263rd battalion.

THE 263RD BATTALION

The 263rd Battalion was formed in November of 1963 from recruits (about 300 primarily from Kien Hoa), cadres from the 261st Battalion, and selected personnel from regional forces throughout Central Nam Bo. At its inception the battalion consisted of 3 infantry companies, 3 combat support companies, and 3 specialized platoons. The battalion participated in at least seven combat engagements in 1964 with the earliest recorded as the Phu Le Battle in Kien Hoa in February..

In June 1964 the old 263rd battalion moved from Kien Hoa province and began to operate in Dinh Tuong, Long An, and Hau Nghia provinces.

¹In 1960 it consisted of only 4 platoons. By 1963 it was brought up to full strength. Elements of the battalion participated in the Ap Bac battle in January 1963.

At that time the battalion consisted of three infantry companies, a combat support company, a signal platoon, a reconnaissance squad, and a medical squad.

Sometime between September and the end of December 1964 the old 263rd battalion moved to the Duong Minh Chau War Zone where its designation was changed to the 711th Battalion, Q.763 Regiment. Q.763 was a newly formed regiment with a strength of three battalions, the 711th, 707th and 709th. The 711th Battalion sent two of its companies to the 707th and 709th. The remaining strength of about 600 personnel was organized into four companies, three infantry and one combat support, and three specialized platoons. (It may be that the dispersal of the heavy combat support platoons was to counter U.S.-ARVN heavy weapons.) The old 263rd remained in the Duong Minh Chau War Zone Regiment Headquarters until at least May of 1965.¹ In December 1964, thirty cadres from platoon level and above returned to Kien Hoa to form the new 263rd battalion. The new 263rd was composed primarily of recruits, with some guerrillas and local district troops from Long An, Dinh Tuong, and Kien Hoa provinces. In addition, squad cadres were transferred from the 261st and 265th battalions and from district and province units in Long An, Dinh Tuong, and Kien Tuong. After a two months' training course in the Con Forest, the battalion moved to Mo Cay district, Dinh Tuong. In March 1965, it was operating primarily in Cai Be, Cai Lay, and Chau Than districts, Dinh Tuong.

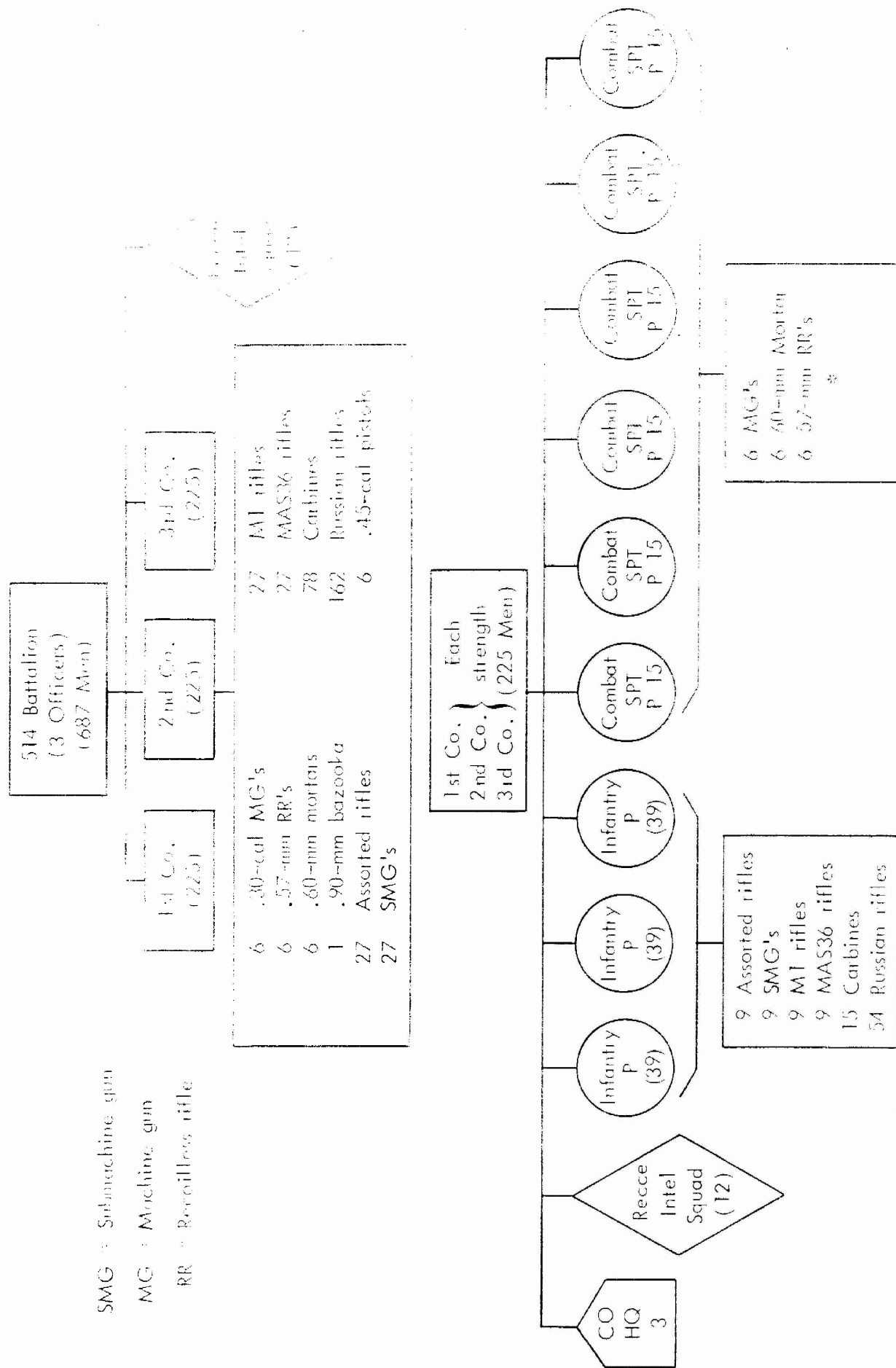
As of December 1965, the 263rd battalion was composed of five companies: three infantry companies and two combat support companies. Companies 1, 2, and 3 were each composed of four platoons, 3 infantry platoons and 1 combat support platoon. Each platoon was composed of 3 squads; each squad had 3 cells; each cell had 3 members. (However, the combat support platoon had 5 squads.)

¹In February 1967, in an interrogation of a Captain, Staff Assistant, Military Affairs Committee, MRIV, it was disclosed that the Q.763 Regiment was still active and attached to Liberation Army Headquarters.

Appendix B

STRUCTURE OF THE 514TH, 261ST, AND 263RD BATTALIONS

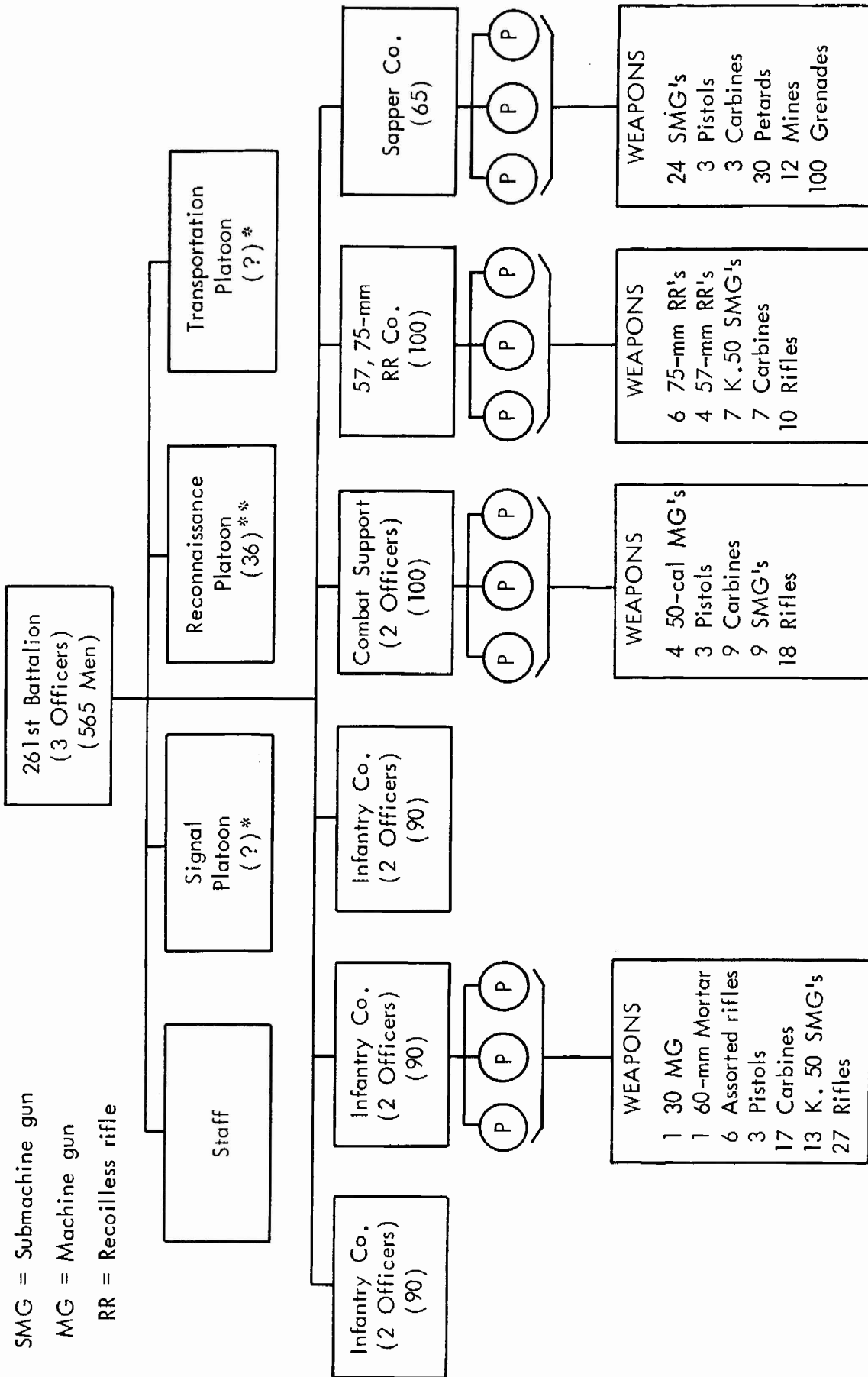
Figures B-1, B-2, and B-3 show the structures of the 514th, 261st, and 263rd battalions during the summer of 1964. The organization of the two regional battalions correspond roughly to the type battalion in Fig. 3. At this time the 514th's combat support function is organic to its companies. In the fall of 1964, the combat support function was displaced from the companies. A combat support company was formed under the direct control of the Province Military Affairs Committee, but attached to the 514th. By 1965 the organization of the 514th conformed roughly to type. Battalion size units are generally organized according to the 3-3-3-3 principle. A battalion will have 3 companies; companies have 3 platoons; platoons have 3 squads; squads, 3 cells.



* 1st Company has Buzooka

Fig. B-1 — 514th Battalion, June 1964

Source: Log File, 7-96

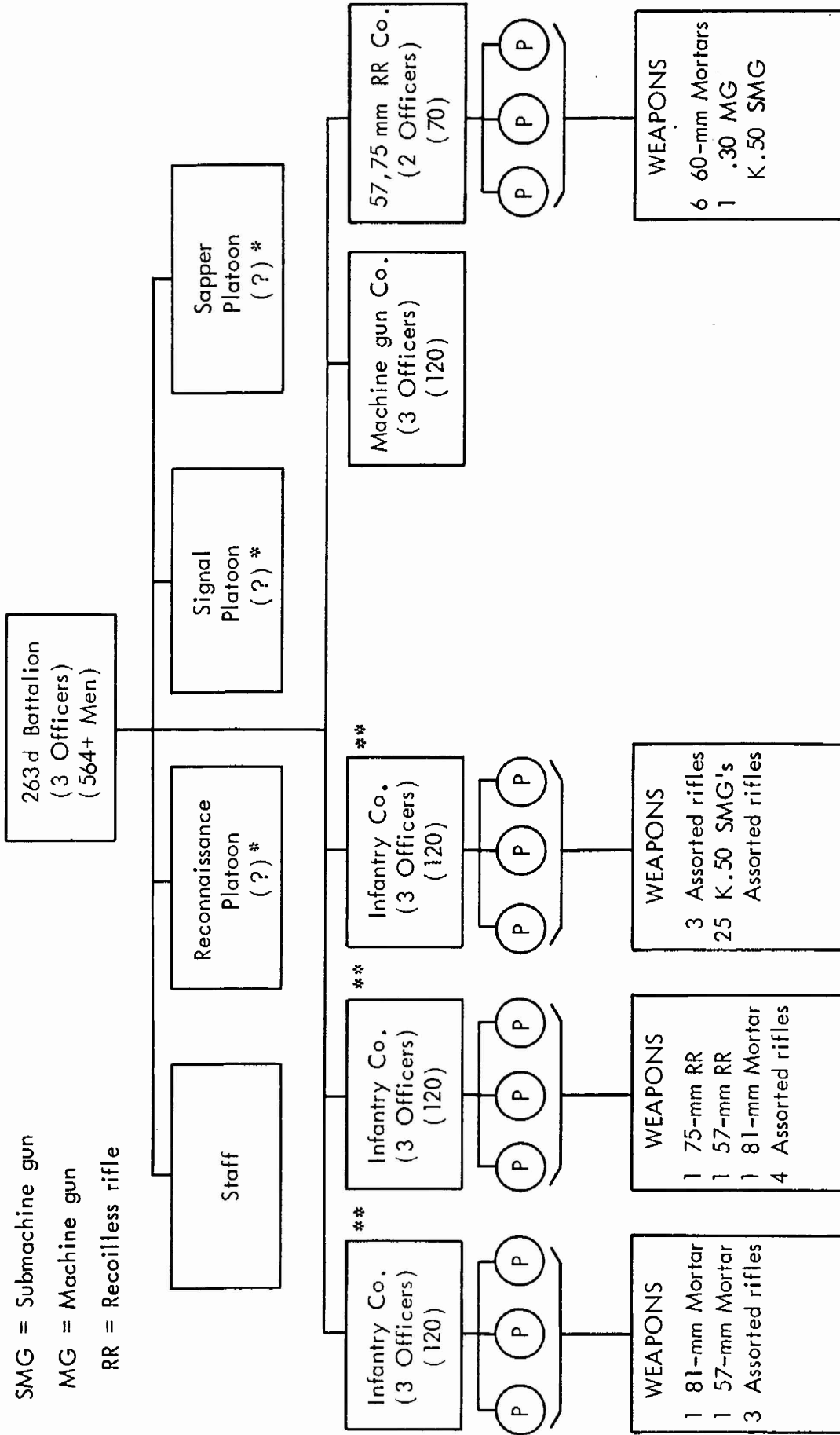


* Number unknown

** Log # 08-508-66

Source: Log No. 9-270

Fig. B-2—261st Battalion, August 1964



* Number unknown

** Each company had a special function accounting for the differences in weapon types. See Appendix A.

Source: Log No. 10-222, DT-100

Fig. B-3—263rd Battalion, August 1964

Appendix C

NOTES ON MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

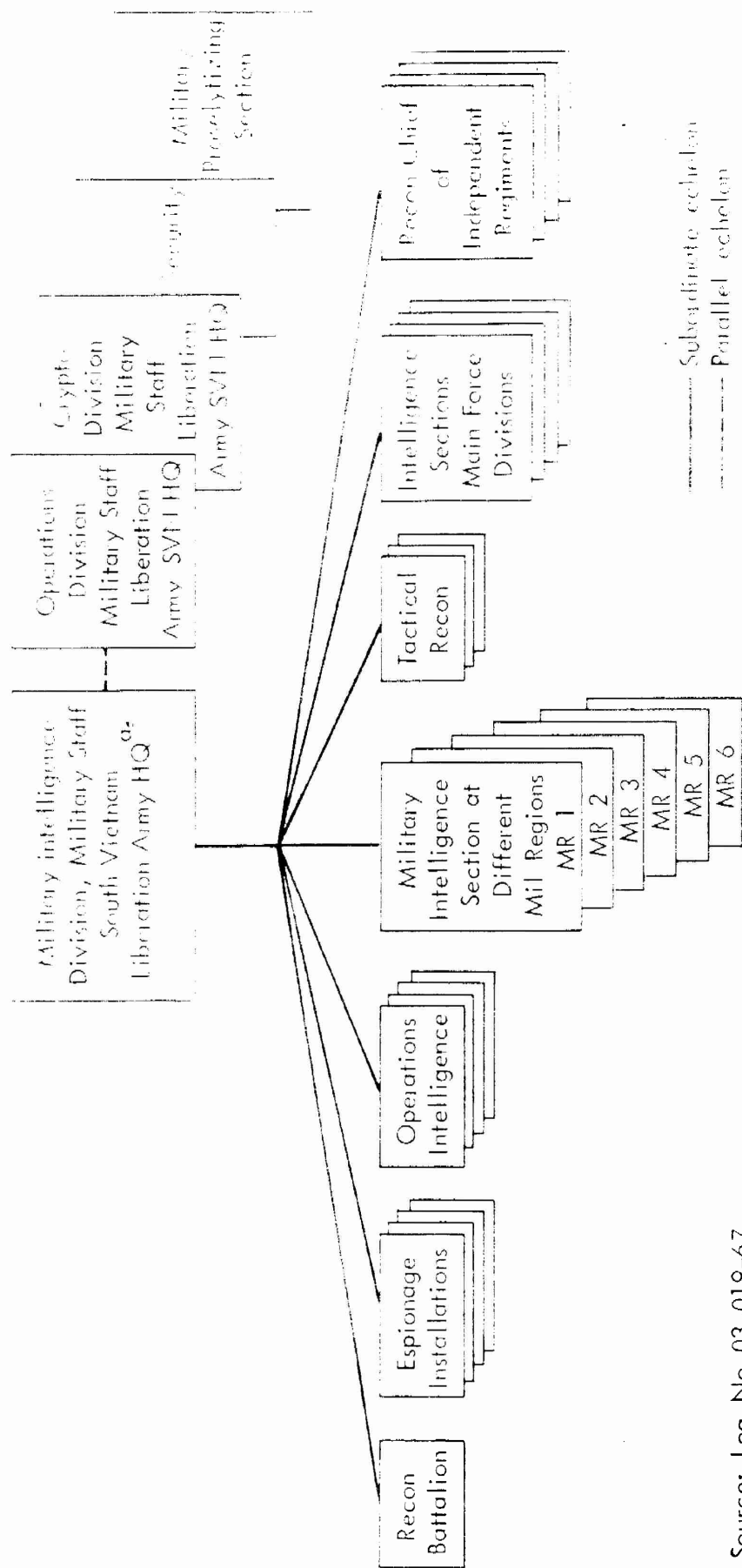
At each echelon the Military Intelligence Agency evaluates enemy intentions and capabilities, conducts sabotage and military proselytizing, and trains reconnaissance and sapper units in their intelligence role.¹ Figures C-1 and C-2 show the reporting system in Viet Cong military intelligence.

Information sought by military intelligence agencies concerns all aspects of enemy military organizations and plans. Desired information ranges from such diverse pieces of information as uniform color; troop's religion, social status, and age; to the more obvious items such as troop and weapon strength, offensive and defensive tactics, organization, chain of command.

Preservation of secrecy in regard to the mission and network is a prime requisite. Long instructional essays are prepared by the intelligence cadre on this subject. Essentially secrecy is preserved by isolating the individual and allowing only limited lateral communication within the network and none outside.

The Chief of a Military Intelligence Agency has the ultimate responsibility for the organization and operation of an effective military intelligence network, its training and guidance. He and his staff must consolidate and evaluate information coming from various sources and submit reports to higher echelons. The organization, effectiveness, and safety of the commo-liaison network over which information moves is also his responsibility. (Appendix D describes commo-liaison more fully.)

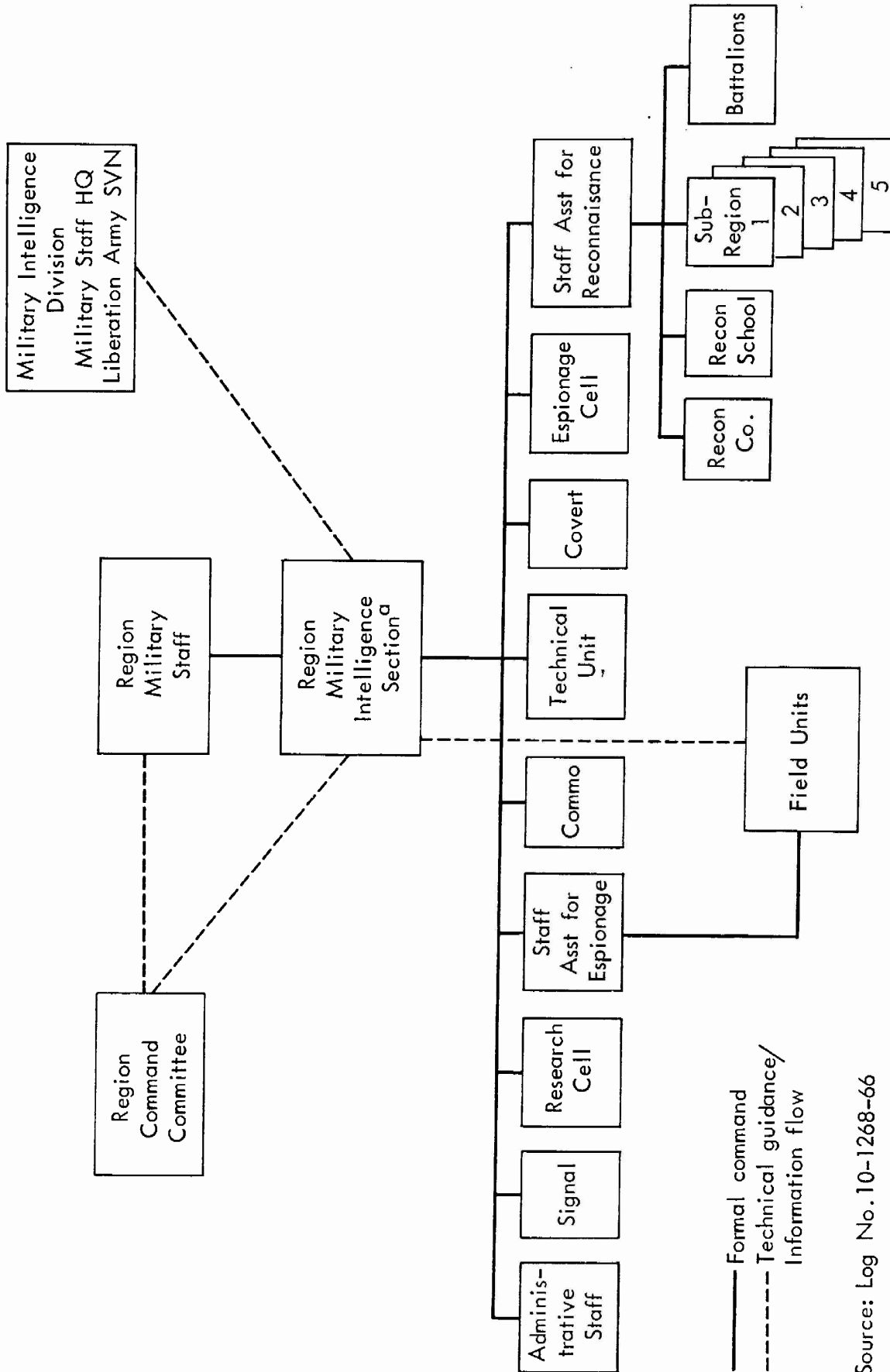
¹There is no espionage function at the district level intelligence agency. The pure espionage function is lodged in the Military Intelligence Agency, but this activity is under the direct control of the Party Committee.



Source: Log No.03-019-67

^aSource indicates some information flow between Liberation Army HQ intelligence and North Vietnamese intelligence.

Fig. C-1—Organization of Viet Cong military intelligence (as of April 1965)



Source: Log No. 10-1268-66

^aRegional military intelligence is under the "technical guidance" of the military intelligence division of Liberation Army HQ. It is under the "operational control" of the region military staff

Fig. C-2—Region military intelligence organization chart

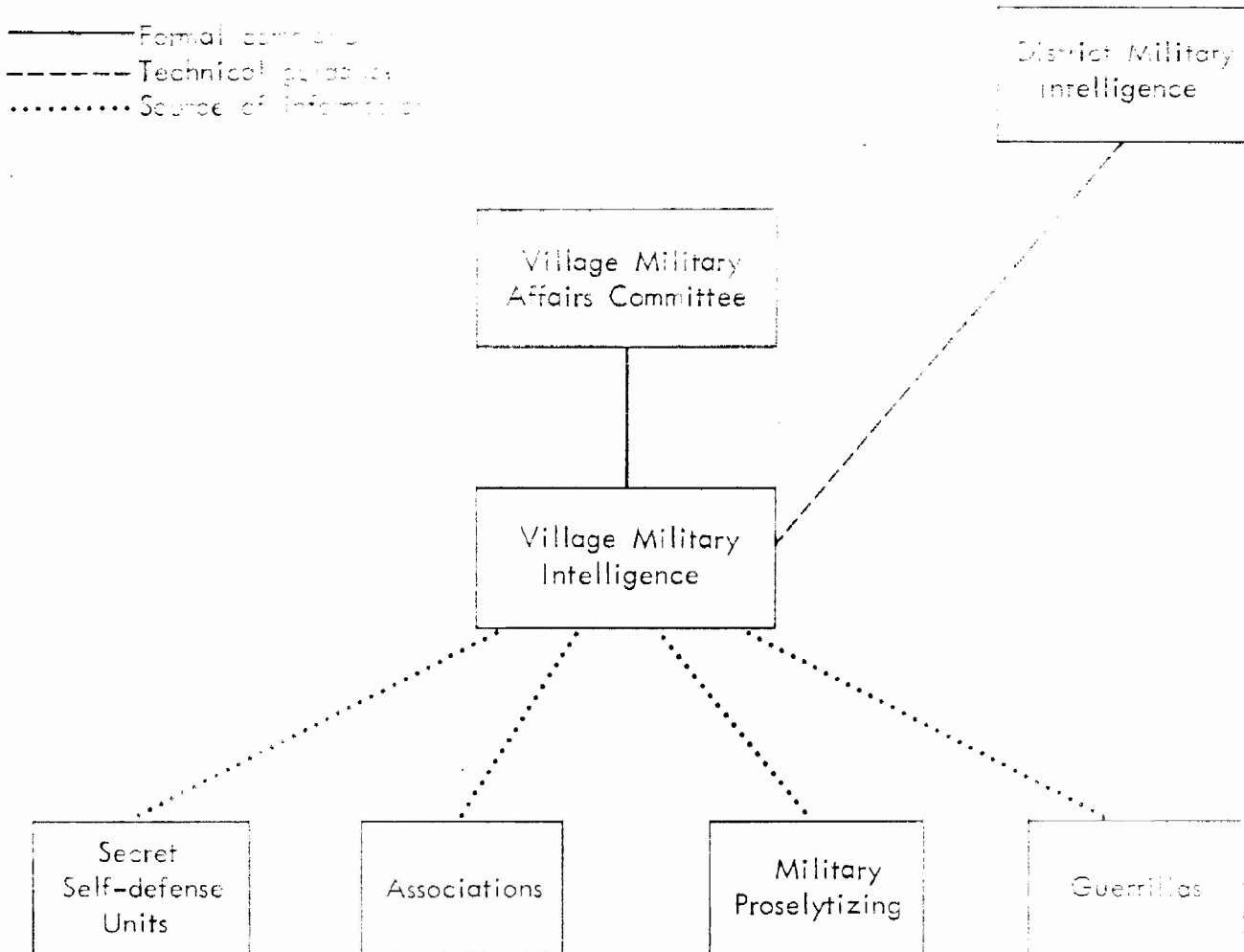
All assistants in a Military Intelligence Agency are responsible for preparing written plans for the training and evaluation of all cadres and the operation of their particular unit, and for solutions to difficulties encountered by agents in the performance of their work.

The Assistant for Reconnaissance trains reconnaissance and sapper units. He plans the investigation of the battlefield prior to an engagement involving reconnaissance and sapper units. The Assistant for Intelligence prepares the reports for submission to higher authorities and establishes and maintains secure files of GVN documents. The Assistant for Espionage is charged with enemy proselytizing, for maintaining an espionage net, and for the development of agents and espionage techniques. The Assistant for Commo-Liaison sees to it that two-way lines of communication are established, staffed, and remain secure in order to insure accurate and timely flow of information.

At the district level the military intelligence organization is subordinate to the District Military Affairs Committee (MAC). It is headed by either the District Assistant Chief of the MAC or a special cadre. District Military Intelligence is responsible for maintaining a file of enemy unit locations arranged in order of importance. This file is used in filling information requests about safe camps and the enemy situation, and to organize and guide individual agents or cells.

The assistant of the Village Military Affairs Committee is in charge of the Village Military Intelligence. He receives technical guidance from the District Military Intelligence unit. Specialized military intelligence organizations are not organized in villages, but militia is used. Civilian organizations contribute non-military information. (See Fig. C-3.)

The techniques used at the village level for acquiring information are rather simple. Observers, for instance, count troops, trucks, and so forth, entering or leaving the post. Logs on post activity are kept. Binoculars are used when closeness to the area under surveillance is impossible. Other rules of thumb that aid in



Source: From Log No.9-614-65

Fig.C-3—Village military intelligence system

detection are: troops moving into a post with their families are there to stay; those without, are there for an imminent operation.

Troops based permanently at a post usually tell their families of forthcoming operations and they in turn spread the information to the whole village. Families buy food for the troops for an operation and this too is indication of movement away from the post. All of this activity allows the Viet Cong to know a high proportion of ARVN operations in advance.

Appendix D

COMMO-LIAISON

Before 1963 the Viet Cong communication-liaison (commo-liaison) mission consisted primarily of conducting cadres through provinces, districts, and villages. After 1963, the increasing level of military operations required more and more weapons, ammunition, cadres, and soldiers to be moved over the commo-liaison networks. In that year, Army Headquarters modified its commo-liaison organization to meet the increased transportation requirements. Commo-liaison was then detached from military headquarters at each echelon and placed under the direct control of the PRP. The new organization was called the Postal Transportation and Communication Service (PTC).

The Postal Transportation and Communication Section at region level typically consists of about seven men, including a chief and his assistant. In Region 2 there were four regional stations on the route in 1965. These were all located in Tay Ninh, the home province of Region 2 headquarters. Each station was manned by about 40 men.¹ These stations had the mission of sending and receiving mail from region headquarters to different places. The personnel operating the route also moved radio, photographic, and medical equipment as well as money and medicines and Viet Cong newspapers. About a ton of material could be moved on each trip with the force in existence in 1965.

A province organization typically has about 20 to 35 people, three to five of whom are military cadres. The remainder are assigned to cells with the following functions: postal, transportation, administrative, propaganda, training, and security guard.

¹In June of 1966 Region 1 headquarters directed that first-aid personnel be given additional training and assigned to PTC stations in the unhealthy jungle areas to provide better medical care for station personnel living there.

The transportation function is not performed below the province level in the organization. The districts and villages were responsible only for postal communications.

The district postal communication unit has about half as many personnel as does the province. The chief of the unit reports to the province Postal Transportation and Communication Section in regard to district postal service and to the district party committee for such things as training and security guard. His assistant organizes and inspects the postal communication cells at the village level. A three-man cell trains village postal communication agents and provides them with technical guidance. Another cell receives and distributes mail and parcel post to district personnel or agencies and to subordinate villages.

Village postal communications cells vary in size. The maximum is about ten men. The cell has a leader, an assistant leader, and specialized and distribution cadres.

At the village level, PRP members are the first choice to furnish the personnel to man the postal communications cell. Members of the Labor Youth group are the second choice. Hamlet postal communications cells also use this group as their source of personnel.

ACTIVITIES

Commo-liaison agents often operate only part time. They live with the villagers or with their families. They are responsible for distributing official mails and for providing guidance to cadres from other villages. The relay stations in the total commo-liaison network are usually installed in people's houses for a period of one month or more. Stations ideally are no more than an 8 hour march apart at average speeds.

Regulations concerning movement of men and supplies over the commo-liaison routes are hard to establish since they depend very much on GVN operations. One rule forbids stations to contact each other directly. Material is relayed at some point midway between

the stations. In Kien Hoa Province all stations are required to maintain secret trenches to house 24 guests in addition to a storage area for secret material. In Dinh Tuong (DT-125), movement on corridors began at noon. (This departure time was probably dictated by conditions in existence at a given period, since other reports stipulate a departure time of 1800.) Two routes were set up in case a GVN operation was reported.

Roads were crossed at the same point, usually at dusk, since protection was made available (guerrillas) at these locations. Routes did not use roads or rice field embankments. Undercover agents aided personnel on the network if a GVN operation threatened their security. These agents were often women who could operate under legal cover. Because of GVN operations routes were frequently changed, at least 2 to 3 times a month.

The following recounts the difficulties that a sapper unit had in moving a short distance in Dinh Tuong Province:

We had to follow the liaison agents. At first we were handed over to the liaison agents of the region, then to those of the province down to the district and to the village. It took us ten days to arrive in Long Dinh although the departure point was My Hanh Dong which was only several hours' walk from Long Dinh. We were introduced to Be Tu, the Long Dinh Village secretary. He was then staying in Kinh Cho Bung near the iron bridge.

We got in touch with the province liaison agents in My Hanh Dong Village. They led us to the Phat Da Pagoda and we had to stay in the mangrove swamp for two days. After that, we were handed over to the district liaison men who led us to the Kinh Xang Don and we stayed there for another two days. The liaison station in the Kinh Xang Don is in the open. There were no houses, and the office was represented only by a table put under the foliage of a tree. Nevertheless, the place was animated, there were many people leaving and arriving. At night, we hung up our hammock and slept in the open, covered by a nylon sheet. Then another liaison man met us and led us to the Kinh Xang canal near the iron bridge. The Long Dinh Military Affairs Section got in touch with us over there and three days later, a village liaison man led us to an abandoned house. Ten days passed before we reached our destination.¹

¹DT-113.

Mail is classified as "urgent," "official," and "individual." Only "individual" mail was censored. The urgent classification was used by province-level agencies. Official letters were sent by Viet Cong agencies within the province. Individual letters were generally to families or to other individuals in the province.

The stations maintain a book on which are recorded the date and time of mail delivery. This registry system helps prevent possible correspondence misplacement. Receipts were issued for money delivered from one relay point to the next.

Military intelligence agents use the commo-liaison networks to pass their intelligence information up and down the organizational structure. A cadre is in charge of liaison and communication between region and province and between province and district. Between province and district "letter drops" and coded data are used. Rarely is personal contact made.¹ The network within the district disseminates information through the village to the hamlets.

¹Intelligence agencies use radios and coded data between region and province.

Appendix E

TRAINING

THE VIET CONG CONCEPT OF TRAINING

To be able to apply such tactics as mobile warfare and attacks on fortifications, Viet Cong cadres and troops must receive adequate training, since these tactics require accurate coordination between the infantry units and units with specialized functions, for example, heavy weapons, sappers, and signal units.

The basic concept of Viet Cong training is to develop skills by training up from guerrilla and self-defense units to higher units.¹ Guerrillas and militias are the base of the military organization. In theory a maximum amount of training is not necessary in Main Force units because cadres or soldiers transferred from lower echelon units to a Main Force unit have gone through several basic training courses or at least have had a high degree of combat experience.² In reality, because Main Force requirements have exceeded supply, the Viet Cong have been forced to assign raw recruits to local or Main Force units.³ This practice obviously has affected the combat capability of those regular units that were assigned inexperienced recruits.

Table E-1 shows the depth to which the Viet Cong intended to develop their training program in the early 1960s. As noted in the text, the Viet Cong believe that political and military training are inseparable and should receive equal emphasis. In practice political and military training do not receive equal time. More emphasis is placed on military training. (See below.)

¹Infantry training courses for non-cadre members are usually fairly short. Success or failure on the battlefield is used to determine the requirements for and the result of training activities.

²Militia units do not receive the formal military training that is provided for local or Main Force units. They receive only simple guidance from local authorities or must rely on their own experience.

³The 300 original recruits of the 263rd Battalion trained only 15 days of the prescribed three months, and were used in combat

Table E-1

VIET CONG TRAINING PROGRAMS

Echelons at Which Training Is Conducted	Type of Course	
	Military	Political
Region, Province	Recruitment	
Region, Province	Training for Advancement from Platoon to Company Leadership	
Army Headquarters	Advanced Course for Battalion Commanders	Advanced Training Course for Province Committee
Region, Province	Technical Services Training	
Army Headquarters	Military Intelligence	Battalion and Company Political Officers Advanced Training Courses
Army Headquarters	Signal, Heavy Weapons	Civilian and Enemy Proselytizing Cadre Training Course
Region	Company Commanders	
Region	Medical	Military Administration Course
Region	Weapons Fabrication	Platoon Political Officers Training Course District Committee Members
Army Headquarters	Company Commanders Advanced Training Course	
Province	Training for Advancement from Assistant Squad Leadership to Assistant Company Leadership	Village Party Chapter Training Course Advanced Training Course for District Committee Members
District	Guerrilla and Militia Training	Village Party Member Training Course
Economic and Social		
Province, District	Rural Administration Course	
Province	Midwife Training Course	
Region	Military/Civilian Medical Training Courses	

Table E-2 shows the potential training capabilities of Viet Cong Regional Headquarters complexes for a select list of courses in 1962. However, the actual numbers fell short of the desired numbers in this period.

In the second half of 1962, in addition to guidance and on-the-job training of cadres, provinces were requested to conduct two courses for guerrilla and militia command section personnel; one course to train 40 assistant platoon leaders and squad leaders; one course to train 70 reconnaissance, special mission, and engineer personnel; and two courses to train 70 reconnaissance and military intelligence personnel.

The discussion so far has dealt primarily with the Viet Cong's general programs with respect to training. The following sections deal with the content of several of the actual courses as they are taught.

Training of New Recruits

In Dinh Tuong the training schedule for replacement personnel for the 514th Battalion was not established until 1965. Early in 1966 the Military Affairs Committee issued a directive stipulating that recruits were to be trained for eight days prior to assignment to a battalion. Recruits could be trained in three areas: My Hanh Trung, Ap Bac Hamlet, Nguyen Van Tiep Canal.

The six days of military training are devoted to close order drill, firing positions, bayonet thrust, grenade toss. Political training is conducted in the remaining two days. Because of a shortage of ammunition training was largely theory. In 1964-1965 each course had about 70 recruits, after that from 30 to 60. The training staff numbered 13. Upon completion of the training period, the cadre in charge of the commo-liaison station informed the 514th that they should send reconnaissance cadres to pick up the recruits. The commo-liaison station chief was also responsible for the movement of recruits from the Recruiting Office to the training areas.

Table E-2

VIET CONG POTENTIAL TRAINING CAPABILITY

Course	Courses/ Year	Training Duration (months)	Maximum No. Students in Course	Echelons at which Training is Conducted
Signal	4	3	100	Army Headquarters
Heavy Weapons	3	4	130	Army Headquarters
Squad Leaders Advance	4	3	50	Army Headquarters
Military Administra- tion Course	2	6	100	Region
Medical Course	2	6	100	Region
Reconnaissance and Special Mission	2	2	100	Region

Figure E-1 shows the flow of recruits to the 514th battalion.

When recruits are sent directly to a battalion, they are assigned to a platoon. Platoons then train their own troops in the battalion camp sites and under the direction of the battalion command staff.

Ideally, recruits were to receive one month of basic training in both political (7 days) and military (23 days) subjects. However, in late 1966 the 514th battalion took in recruits with eight days' training.² There were two days of political theory and six days of military training. The following political subjects were to be taught: situation and mission of the unit; policy of the South Vietnam Revolution and the NLF of South Vietnam; rural policy and proselytizing, leadership, and NLF Army tradition.

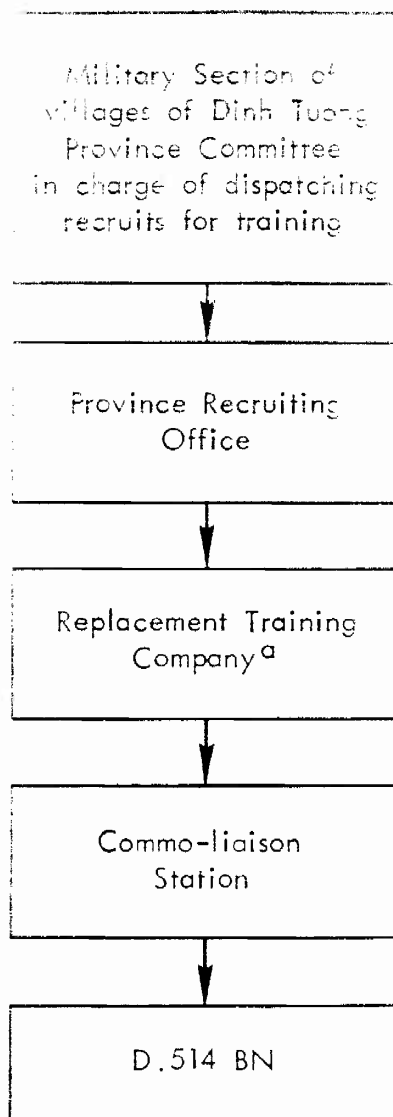
Military training was supposed to include use and maintenance of weapons; grenade throwing; digging of fortifications; camouflage techniques; movement procedures; individual, cell, and squad tactics in combat; sanitation and preventive medicine; self-help measures to be taken against toxic chemicals; discipline; guard and patrol duty; liaison; reconnaissance; POW escort.

The Assistant Chief of Staff Operations, 5th Division,

stated that instruction in the following topics is minimum requirement to enable a Viet Cong battalion to perform with average effectiveness:

1. Marksmanship and weapon familiarization.
2. Techniques of armored vehicle destruction.
3. Ambush tactics.
4. Surprise attack.
5. Anti-heliborne or paratroop tactics.

Some of these subjects are first taught in the initial training period and then are part of the continuous training program in a battalion.



^aThe Replacement Training Company is subordinate to the Military Affairs Committee (Dinh Tuong)

Fig.E-1—Flow of Recruits

Squad and Platoon Leader Training

The Province Party Committee is responsible for training squad and platoon cadres. Their training periods are three and five months, respectively.¹ The Province Party Committee allocates training spots to be filled among the various districts. The District Military Affairs Committee in turn requires that the companies within a battalion select candidates for the course. Platoon cadres are selected by company level cadres, squad cadres are chosen by the platoon leaders. Company and battalion officers pass on all nominations.

Twenty percent of the time devoted to developing the leadership of platoon and squad leaders is spent on political training, the rest on military subjects. The course work emphasizes methods for building up unit strength and development of qualities such as flexibility, vigilance, determination.

Part of the time basic military skills are practiced: bayonet drill, concealment, leap-frog maneuvering, three-man cell operations, and so on. The use and characteristics of large weapons are also reviewed as well as techniques of guerrilla warfare.

Training of Combat Support Units

Training of the crews for heavy machine guns and recoilless rifle and mortar units stresses accurate and timely fire support and coordination with infantry units. The original training program was designed by the Viet Cong to last four months. Heavy emphasis was placed on the proper maintenance and firing of the large weapons assigned to these units.

¹See DT-70. The Regional Party Committee is in charge of training company cadres. The training course for company cadres lasts about eight months. Platoon leaders of heavy weapons platoons are also trained at region.

Signal Training

In 1963 the Viet Cong had established a 14-month radio maintenance course for Delta-based cadres. The course consisted of both theory and practice, and included instructions in general electronics (circuits, condensers, resistors, electromagnetism, electronic tubes, and so forth). Practical education included the assembling and dis-assembling of a radio.

In 1964 a school was started in Kien Tuong Province to train personnel in signal techniques to fill the requirements of Military Region 2 for this service. By December of 1964 there were 50 students being trained in three basic subjects of communication work. As of early 1966 the Kien Tuong Signal School still functioned. The following is a resume of its characteristics as related by a Viet Cong interviewee.

The program and training period varies by classes. The class for signal squad leaders lasts 6 months. The course consists of both technical and political courses. The technical courses are electricity, principles and uses of radio, telephone, and switchboards; telephone wire laying; the organization of the signal unit in combat battalions. In addition, trainees are instructed in the situation in the country and the world and the policies of the South Vietnam Liberation Front.

A Morse code training class also lasts 6 months. There are specialized courses in the principles of electricity; uses of radios; radio transmission and communication regulations; personnel receive three hours of sending practice and five hours of receiving per day. Political training was the same as that for the squad leaders. Trainees worked eight hours per day. This training requires one instructor for each five students.

A radio repair class lasts one year. This training program includes instructions on electricity, principle of creating and

transmitting radio waves, fundamental circuits of different kinds of radio. Trainees pay more attention to practice than theory, and practice repairing radios, telephones, and switchboards.¹

Sapper Training

The specialized training sapper personnel receive reflects their special function. The total number trained at one time is from 75 to 100 men. These troops were in companies, platoons, and squads. Duration of training varies from 3 to 6 months. In the early stages of the current war the training period was longer, but as attrition increased, the course was broken down into specialized topics and became shorter. Thus not all soldiers became versed in all phases of demolition work.

Sappers are given extensive training in demolition work. In addition to the usual instruction in the use and function of the rifle, subjects covered included: (1) the use and handling of various types of explosives (TNT, Beta Mines, Bangalore Torpedos), (2) the wiring of mines, (3) methods of hiding batteries both on land and in water, (4) repair of mines, (5) evading mine sweepers and detection, (6) observation and reconnaissance techniques.

Key sapper cadres are given further training that includes theory of guerrilla war, the principles of electricity, military topography, map making and reading, battlefield observation, development of combat play, and combat and battlefield reporting.

As noted in the text, training is also given in the methods for crossing all types of terrain. Techniques of infiltration, camouflage, and reconnaissance must also be a part of the sapper's knowledge. The offensive tactics the sapper learns are broken down into separate

Trainees are of all echelons, selected from district local force units. Particular preference was for "poor farmers and those with natural aggressiveness and keen senses, especially of sight and sound."

instructions for procedures for attacking boats, bridges, airfields, vehicles, outposts, blockhouses, and enemy troops.

Engineer Training

The province level engineers' training course is similar to that for sappers, since engineers are taught how to use the various types of explosives used in demolition work. In addition they are trained in the construction of fortifications, bridge construction and destruction, and road sabotage and repair.¹

Engineer units at the hamlet and village level are instructed in packing of explosives and maintaining and assembling detonating devices. They are also taught how to construct underground tunnels, road barriers, fortifications, and trenches.

Reconnaissance Cadre Training School

Reconnaissance cadre schools are subordinate to Region. For example, a school in Region 2 processed 50 trainees in 1963. This school had three instructors and a director. Trainees were broken down into three cells, one cell per instructor. The type of instruction included clearing obstacles, disarming mines and grenades, circumventing open areas, crossing rivers, day and night movement to a target by crawling under barbed wire, building sand tables, sketching maps, studying of targets, using compass and binoculars, using map-sketch symbols, and learning how to make visual observations and estimates.

Training of Militia and District Units

In 1965 the Viet Cong instructed that training for the village guerrillas had to be 20 days and should reach 30 days per

¹Engineers function at the district as well as province level. At the district level training included the art of sabotage. They were also trained in building fortifications and obstacles to impede road and rail travel.

year. Training was to be split equally between military and political subject matter. Guerrilla cadres were to train every other day and attend a military refresher class for one hour per day. But training of inter-village and village-hamlet guerrilla units in liberated areas could be concentrated in 3- or 5-day phases.

Guerrilla and self-defense forces were to be trained in sniper fire, trenches in defense and assault, the use of and function of grenades and other mines, how to dig and use secret tunnels, how to use homemade weapons. They were also trained in performing civilian labor functions.

District companies are trained so that they might defend against countersweep operations, conduct surprise raids, fight from trenches, ambush, and conduct limited demolition work and psychological warfare.

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